

CONAN II

Screenplay by

Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway

FADE IN:

RED SCREEN - PRE-CREATION

The cauldron of the gods, the molten pre-earth: Yet the screen is not completely red--something STIRS, in the crimson light, thrusting, heaving, squirming, as if struggling to be born: a DARKNESS, swelling and pulsing with inhuman life. OVER this is heard the VOICE of an elderly man, vaguely pedantic, the speaking voice of an old Chaucerian scholar, perhaps...

VOICE

Know, O Prince, that in
the timeless age before
man first crawled from
the slime, gods stalked
the earth...

At the word "gods," the DARKNESS suddenly swells, filling the screen with BLACK ENERGY, as a MUSIC MOTIF strums, like the Giants' motif in "Das Reingold."

VOICE (CONT)

And, like the men who
would follow them, the
gods made war.

Now SOMETHING ELSE STIRS in the ruddy depths--A SECOND PRESENCE. But this "presence" is a WHITE LIGHT, in opposition to the BLACK ENERGY. Suddenly, at the word "war," the DARKNESS spurts like an amoeba, a TENDRIL OF UTTER BLACK stabbing across the screen into the WHITE GLOW, which recoils and counterattacks with a blast of PIERCING WHITE LIGHT. Light flashes back and forth, as MUSIC SWELLS, pounding, fierce, and now SHAPES BEGIN TO FORM out of the frantic warring forces--

PRIMEVAL FORCES

Inhuman, non-solid, HUGE FIGURES of darkness and light plunge against one another, as CONGEALING CLOUDS take solid form behind them, becoming a MOLTEN EARTH in the moment of planetary birth. Lightning rips across the scene, from FIGURE to FIGURE, scarlet and white and black and gold, the MUSIC HAMMERING like the striking of an anvil, the earth being forged beneath the struggling gods, forming OUT of their struggle--

BURNING EARTH

Now the HUGE FIGURES are almost solid, and the earth at their shadowy, smoke-covered feet is molten, heavy with volcanic clouds, churning and alive. ONE of the figures ROARS--a cry like nothing that's ever lived, a scream of agony torn from the universe itself, so loud the crashing thunder of a birthing earth is drowned out; and now the TWO FIGURES plunge against each other in

earnest, taking on almost HUMAN SHAPE--

THE FEET OF THE GODS

Mountains push up from the quaking earth; lava spills in fiery rivulets into oceans that turn to steam; clouds churn in the furnace glow--and the GODS, for they are gods, appear and vanish as shadows amid the steam, the smoke, the fury of a world a-borning; wrestling in the light and darkness.

THE GODS

Tall as mountains, hidden by fire and smoke, they are visible only in brief glimpses: a tentacular arm, a scaly hide, a fluttering of wings, dark and light, thundering, roaring. Good and Evil, and the dark image is Evil.

EVIL

apparently triumphant, looming above its opponent, a figure of fog and darkness, barely visible; its massive "head" twists in satanic pleasure, as it bellows, fantastic rock-like muscles rippling, huge black wings beating the arm above and behind it, a dimly-glimpsed HORN prominently thrusting from between its eyes.

GOOD

somehow more HUMAN in appearance, yet not human at all, glowing with inner life and spirit; slowly being forced backward by the massive weight of the other god; obscured by fog and smoke, lightning and fire.

THE EARTH

Spilling from caves, crevices, mounds, like ants fleeing a riverflood, come hundreds, thousands of PRIMITIVE HUMANS, naked and savage, dodging through smoke, tossed by the quaking, heaving earth, screaming, terrified, like souls falling through the circles of Hell.

GOOD

At the sound of the HUMAN SCREAMS O.S., GOOD seems to gain strength, and now pushes upward against its opponent, striving, swelling in size, its "hands" reaching, taking on shape and form--

THE GODS

And now, as the MUSIC MOTIF pounds, swallowing thunder and screams and the bellowing of the gods, the WHITE IMAGE gets a grip on the DARK GOD'S HORN, and with a ripple of fantastic muscles, a wrenching and spouting of blood and ichor, a terrible, dying, unnatural SHRIEK, the HORN is torn from the scarlet god's skull--

DARK GOD'S EYES

glaring red with agony and hate, slowly dulling, dying—as its
SERIEK echoes and re-echoes—

PRIMEVAL EARTH

The figures part, one falling, crumbling like mortar and stone,
the other triumphant, hand thrust overhead, the horn clenched in
its fist, its BLAZING WHITE BODY gradually filling the screen with
LIGHT—which burns away all other images, as a new MUSICAL MOTIF,
more lilting, begins to rise—and before it reaches its fullest
expression, it is CUT DOWN by a restatement of the original
threatening motif, and the SCREEN GOES BLACK.

CREDITS

FADE IN:

A MAP - THE EARTH - THE HYBORIAN AGE

The contours of the Hyborian Age continents and oceans—at least
that portion of them which corresponds to present-day Europe,
western Asia, and North Africa—appear. The various kingdoms are
marked with archaic calligraphy—AQUILONIA, NEMEDIA, TURAN,
ZAMORA, etc. CIMMERIA and the northernmost lands are barely
visible, off in the far northwest.

As the VOICE speaks again, CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES IN toward the
kingdom of Zamora...and toward a city represented by a vaguely
Oriental-looking STAR near its southeastern border: SHADIZAR.

VOICE

Then, Man was... man, and
the kingdoms of man.
Proud Aquilonia...warlike
Nemedia...Turan, with its
riders armored in silver
and gold.

(beat)

Yet the fate of that
Hyborian Age, and of all
the world... the
violent aftermath of the
war the gods had made,
eons before...hinged not
upon great generals and
marching armies... but
rather upon the capital
of the kingdom of Zamora,
which men called, with
good reason... Shadizar
the Wicked.

As CAMERA ZEROES IN on Shadizar's star, a LINE OF FLAME runs diagonally across the map, searing the parchment, blackening the image, splitting it in two, the sides of the map curling up and away in fragments of ash, to reveal—

EXT. HYBORIAN NIGHT SKY

A crystal clear summer night, crowded with stars, bright with an enormous FULL MOON.

CAMERA PANS DOWN past a towering, overhanging MOUNTAIN RANGE, past one particular peak that thrusts into the sky in a shape that subliminally reminds us of the scarlet god's horn--this is DAGOTE PEAK. About a hundred yards below the tip of the peak, a TEMPLE, carved into the face of the cliff, glows warmly with torchlight. CAMERA CONTINUES PAN down and down to the glittering spires and domed towers of an ancient city crowding against the mountain's base. The city: SHADIZAR.

EXT. SHADIZAR THE WICKED - DUSK

Seen from above, SHADIZAR is a sprawling fecund cluster of stone structures surrounded by a high, fortress-like wall—one of the greatest, and certainly the most decadent of the ancient cities which sprout along the ROAD OF KINGS; the architecture is faintly eastern, vaguely Byzantine.

South of a central PLAZA fronted by the private two-story mini-palaces of Shadizar's wealthiest citizens, is a dark hive of twisting streets and crumbling-stone buildings: THE MAZE, den of thieves. Here, in these murky, smokey byways, night has come early; few lights burn; voices cry out briefly in the darkness, either in laughter or in agony; a doorway to a TAVERN opens, spilling light on a muddy cobbled street as a SHADOWY FIGURE passes within; music and roaring laughter spill out with the light, are muted as the door slams shut again...

INT. TAVERN - DUSK

The SHADOWY FIGURE, revealed as a short stout THIEF, snakes through the bustling mob inside the tavern--past tables where half-naked DANCING GIRLS writhe to the music of pipe and drum--ducking under sweating serving WENCHES carrying wooden trays heavy with food and drink--shoving between overcrowded tables where burly ZAMORIANS arm-wrestle with lithe, sallow-skinned KHITANS from the mystic East. As he pushes through the throng, the THIEF shouts out an unintelligible message to any who will listen, but his words are swallowed up by the din. He's like a ghost in the smoke and shadow.

The tavern has two floors; the second floor is reached by a creaking stair that rises to a wooden balcony directly above—

ANGLE - PIT

At one end of the room, a PIT has been dug into the dirt floor; and here two sweating PIT FIGHTERS grapple bare-handed before a crowd of raucous thieves and brigands. The onlookers shout encouragement and place bets with an ELDERLY HALF-BLIND BOOKIE who stands at one end of the pit, making change, jingling coins.

ANGLE - INSIDE PIT

A huge SHEMITE, greased like a pig, has got his opponent--an equally-huge CIMMERIAN--in a full-Nelson and looks about ready to break the Cimmerian's back. The CIMMERIAN howls; the two fighters sprawl in the dust, twisting about, grappling and grunting. The CIMMERIAN arches his back, bringing his face into the torchlight: it's CONAN, apparently--and incredibly--outmatched. He glances up, between his GROANS, at the bookie out of frame.

CONAN'S POV - BOOKIE

The old man WINKS, jiggling a full purse, as GAMBLERS crowd around, offering handfuls of coins, shouting "Ten silver crowns on the Shemite... Three gold on the Shemite... The Shemite, for twenty crowns..."

ANGLE - CONAN

He lays it on thick, moaning like a man in pure agony. He lets the panting Shemite twist him around in a vise-like grip, bending Conan's neck forward, as if ready ready to snap it--

ANGLE - EDGE OF PIT

The small THIEF comes into view, pushing through the crowd. He shoves in as close to Conan as he can, trying to catch the Cimmerian's attention in the brief pause between two shouted gambling bids.

THIEF

Conan--!

At this, Conan manages to twist around so that, even locked in his opponent's apparently lethal embrace, he can see the thief. Conan's eyes, behind the seeming pain, are questioning:

THIEF

They caught Subotai--
they're hanging him and a
score more of thieves--in
the Plaza!

ANGLE - CONAN

hearing this, shocked, reacts--

ANOTEER ANGLE - THE PIT

Conan breaks the huge Shemite's grip in one easy move. He picks up the startled man and hurls him bodily out of the pit--then leaps from it himself, pushing through the astonished mob like an ice-breaker through a frozen sea--

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PLAZA - DUSK

Conan shoves to the edge of the crowd of EAGER ONLOOKERS, knocking hapless bystanders out of his way like tenpins. The rest of the crowd, their bloodlust aroused by the spectacle before them, are oblivious to anything but the show.

ANGLE - THE CROWD

Conan shoves past--A young, haunted-eyed MOTHER in rags holds up her baby to watch the show. Two STREET URCHINS tumble in a fight on the muddy cobbles. An OLD MAN with decayed teeth cackles gleefully. One or two white-robed DAGOTHIAN PRIESTS, their shaven heads gleaming in the sun. The PRIESTS bow and mutter silent prayers, hands clasped over their faces as if touched by the scene before them. On the very fringe of the crowd, yet clearly apart from it, is a small group of stone-faced BLACK WARRIORS in peculiar leather uniforms, leaning on spears. Various ARMED CITY GUARDS are also about, moving through the crowd, alert against trouble.

ANGLE - CONAN

Snarling, he shoves a FAT MERCHANT from his path--when suddenly a GREAT CRY goes up from the mob, almost a cheer. ON SOUND there is a STRUMMING, an almost musical sound, like several harp strings being plucked simultaneously. Conan stops short, looks up over the heads of the mob--

CONAN'S POV - THE PLAZA GALLOWES

A sizable gallows-platform fills the center of a large cobbled plaza ringed by many marble-faced mini-palaces. Upon the platform, raised several feet above eye level and the GUARDS who keep the straining crowd back, TRAPS have just been sprung--the STRUMMING SOUND--and we see, past the heads of the mob, the dangling feet of a score of ragtag thieves of various races. Some are already dead, slowly swaying at rope's end; others twitch and jerk spasmodically for a few pitiful moments.

In the center of the group are already-lifeless limbs of one who was clad in foot-gear made of wolf's hide.

ANGLE - CONAN

Grim, his eyes moving upward toward the dead man's face.

ANGLE - SUBOTAI

Dead, his neck broken, dangling from the noose amid his peers.

ANGLE - CONAN

Raging soundlessly, his face a mask of barely suppressed anger. Around him the mob slowly disperses. Behind him, watching him, is a veiled WOMAN in white robes, a tall, well-fed EUNUCH looming protectively beside her. She seems intent, studying the Cimmerian as he swings around, like an animal in pain, searching for the source of its pain, ready to howl. He approaches the gallows slowly, gaze riveted on Subotai's swaying form.

Among the crowd, mumblings are heard—"This bunch died faster than last week's lot," etc.—but not by Conan. He's lost in his private anguish.

Near him, a PORTLY MERCHANT sniffs a nosegay, as a LEAN MERCHANT beside him eyes Subotai's corpse, its legs twisting slowly, slowly, in the wind.

LEAN MERCHANT

It was that little
Hyrkanian they made the
most of. What was his
crime, anyway?

PORTLY MERCHANT

I heard the fool stole a
magistrate's purse...

Conan hears, swings toward them, unnoticed. His eyes bore into them as the Portly Merchant gestures with his chin toward a nearby structure. Conan's eyes follow.

PORTLY MERCHANT (CONT'D)

...and of all the judges
in Shadizar the Wicked to
steal from, he chose
Luda.

CONAN'S POV - THE PLAZA PALACES

CAMERA PANS up and across the palace facade immediately opposite during the above dialogue. A domed stone building, heavily-barred,

and guarded. A plump figure in red and black judicial robes watches the scene from a gilded iron balcony on the second floor: MAGISTRATE LUDA. He munches on a pomengranate, picking the seeds from between his lips.

ANGLE - CONAN - CLOSE

Looking up in silent, smoldering rage.

ANGLE - MEDIUM CLOSE - LUDA

The red juice of the pomengranate runs down his fat chin. He wipes it away on the black sleeve of his judge's robe, and turns with a disinterested sigh away from the mass gallows below.

CLOSE - CONAN

His eyes bore into the palace above.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREETS - NIGHT

Away from the Maze, the streets are better lighted, but no less ancient, no less thick with an atmosphere of fear. A group of shaven DAGOTEIAN PRIESTS, swinging incense censers, droning a low, muted chant, pass down the street, paralleling the gutter trough where sewage spillage drains away between the cobbles. OLD WOMEN in doorways bow as the priests pass, their faces hidden by veils and cowls; they hold lanterns which cast the priests' shadows across the walls of the residential-style buildings which line this street.

On the far side of the street, a group of THREE BLACK WARRIORS in armor watch the priests pass. ONE BLACK turns and spits into the road; the other two pull him aside, and they move off up the street, into the fog. TWO SMALL CHILDREN playing with a dog look up as the blacks go by; terrified, they gather the dog up, rush into a lighted doorway to parental safety.

ANGLE - ROOFTOP

Overlooking the street, a HUMAN SHADOW crouches on the ornately carved overhang. It is CONAN, in camouflage paint, stripped to a loincloth, carrying a knife, a short sword at his waist. He rises silently, running like a cat along the edge of the roof, above and a short distance behind the group of priests. He doesn't seem to be following them. They are simply going in the same direction he is.

ANGLE - STREET

The priests pass a crowd of worried-looking citizens gathered about an OLD MAN in a dirty white robe; the robe looks as if it

might once have been as white as that worn by the Dagothian priests, but it and its owner have fallen on evil times. Madness burns in the old man's eyes. He staggers wildly, his VOICE rising and falling from an inaudible whisper; his listeners are riveted, pale and frightened. The same MOTHER seen at the hanging clutches a squalling infant to her bare breast, nursing; she senses the passage of the priests behind her, glances at them, cringes away back into the crowd.

OLD MAN
(as priests pass)
The moon waits...the
stars... and Dagoth Peak
broods in silent
judgement...

He points past the spires; the crowd involuntarily glances up.

THEIR POV - THE PEAK

looming dark over the city, the temple lights warm and almost friendly.

ANGLE - THE SOOTHSAYER

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
All will die, all, all
will die...for the Time
is upon us...it draws
near, it draws near...

ANGLE - ROOFTOP

Conan glances down, seeing the old man. Runs on, ignoring him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PLAZA - NIGHT

Almost deserted now, but for several tattered CRONES and OLD MEN who work to lower the dead from the communal gallows into waiting carts drawn by powerful-looking draft horses.

ANGLE - LUDA'S PALACE

Lights waver beyond the silk-curtained, iron-barred windows. TWO HELMETED GUARDS patrol the entrance to the townhouse, alert. The group of white-robed Dagothian Priests goes by, some turning down an alley that leads to the rear of the townhouse; the others going off to take charge of the death-carts, swinging their censers to send a fine mist of incense wafting over the rudely stacked corpses, as if in some sacred ritual for the dead.

EXT. PLAZA ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A SHADOW slowly rises into view on the roof of the house adjacent to Luda's, framed against the stars. It is CONAN, looking down at the priests thoughtfully, then shrugging as he looks across at Luda's mini-palace. He rises silently, runs to the edge of the roof he's on. An alley ten feet across separates the two buildings. Conan studies it, then takes a few steps backward.

CUT TO:

EXT. A FOUNTAIN GARDEN - NIGHT

A quiet cul-de-sac where a marble fountain whispers in the moonlight. The WOMAN IN WHITE sits on the rim of the fountain, gazing into the placid water. A few steps behind her stands the huge, silent EUNUCH, hands folded over his massive chest, his eyes sweeping the garden warily. From her purse the woman removes a small handful of GLITTERING WHITE POWDER.

ANGLE - POOL

She sprinkles the powder onto the water's surface; her reflection vanishes as the WATER GLITTERS. A new IMAGE appears: it is CONAN on the rooftop, backing up. The WOMAN bends forward to watch closely.

ANGLE - MAGICAL IMAGE IN POOL

Conan takes several running steps, leaps—

CUT TO:

EXT. LUDA'S DOMED ROOFTOP - NIGHT

—and spanning the ten foot distance between the houses, he lands, rolling, on THE DOME. He almost rolls off; has to catch himself by pressing hands flat against the cool stone of the dome, almost hugging it. After a moment, he regains his feet like a cat, knife in hand, eyes searching the darkness.

CONAN'S POV - THE REAR ALLEY

Below, at the rear of Luda's small palace, lantern-light from a hook above a narrow stone door reveals a strange gathering: several of the priests stand with Luda, counting out bright golden coins into a leather purse. Luda, dressed in robes for sleeping, watches them impassively, with a lizard's gaze, his eyes on the purse and the coins. The priests finish counting, pull the purse drawstring taut, and hand it to the magistrate, who tucks it away in his robe. He nods formally to them; but they turn away without responding and return up the alley to the street. Luda, stung by

their apparent curt dismissal, ducks inside his door, slamming and bolting it audibly.

ANGLE - CONAN

Half-curious, glances out at the plaza--

CONAN'S POV - THE PLAZA

--as the priests who just paid Luda join the others at the carts. All ride off together, slowly, in procession like a funeral parade, vanishing into night and fog.

ANGLE - CONAN

dismisses them from his thoughts, looks about for an entrance into Luda's palace. Finds it.

ANGLE - ROOF TRAPDOOR

Near the crest of the dome, a trapdoor is visible, for use in the event of a fire. Conan tries to lift the heavy wooden door; it won't budge.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR CEILING/TRAPDOOR - NIGHT

Seen from beneath, the trapdoor is clearly locked by a thick iron drawbolt.

EXT. LUDA'S PALACE ROOFTOP

Conan stops trying to lift the trapdoor, squats. From the leather pouch at his belt he takes out a LODESTONE. He tests it on his knife; the knife clicks against the magnetized stone with a soft chink. Pulling it free from the knife, he presses it to the outer edge of the trapdoor, running it carefully along the edge until he feels it tug. It's attracted by something on the underside of the trap.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR CEILING/TRAPDOOR

Slowly, almost magically, the DRAWBOLT slides back. The trapdoor lifts, and Conan peers down through the opening with a wolfish grin.

CUT TO:

INT. LUDA'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT - CLOSE

Darkness. Luda, only his plump head protruding from beneath thick covers, lies snoring. Abruptly his eyes snap open in surprise, as

if he hears--no, senses--another presence.

LUDA
Who's there?

LUDA'S POV - THE FAR WALL

Conan, shrouded in shadow. Of his head, nothing shows but his eyes, gleaming ferally. An errant moonbeam is reflected from a dagger in his hand. He seems not even to breathe.

CONAN
(low, emotionless)
I am Conan, a Cimmerian.

ANGLE - LUDA

Trying not to move his head, or raise his voice, as his hand sneaks beneath his fat pillow.

LUDA
What is it you want?

LUDA'S POV - AS BEFORE

CONAN
Subotai was my friend.

ANGLE - LUDA

Carefully pulling a small, delicate--but deadly--CROSSBOW of gold from beneath his pillow, breathing shallowly, shifting it into position.

LUDA
Subotai? I don't know
the name.

LUDA'S POV - CONAN

CONAN
You knew it when you
condemned him.

ANGLE - LUDA

Panicking. He heaves up, aiming the crossbow at the shadowed figure in a sudden, desperate movement. As he's about to loose his arrow--Conan's dagger seems to bloom in his corpulent throat like a scarlet flower. With a strangled gasp, Luda releases the arrow. A wild shot that goes into his bedding. Then he falls back, dead, eyes staring into eternity.

ANOTHER ANGLE - CONAN

Conan crosses to stand above Luda's corpse. Yanks his knife from the magistrate's throat as a growing stain turns the bedclothes a dark red. Conan wipes the blade clean on Luda's pillow.

CONAN

May you join him in hell.

He's about to leave when he spies the leather purse given Luda by the Dagothian priests, lying atop a jewel-encrusted trunk near the bed. He tucks the purse into his belt, then crouches to examine the trunk. Its jewels glitter in the moonlight. He shrugs. Why not?

ANGLE - BEDCHAMBER JEWEL CASE

A small golden padlock snaps open under his knife. He lifts the lid cautiously, wary for a creak--when somewhere in the distance a BELL BEGINS TO CLANG. He looks up.

CONAN

Damn.

ANGLE - BEDCHAMBER

Rising, he turns to the bedchamber's door. FOOTSTEPS rush toward it from the corridor outside. Conan latches the door, throws the bolt, glances about the room. He runs to the French door-like window, throws it open to reveal iron bars blocking his escape. He slams into the bars with his massive shoulder; ANOTHER BELL BEGINS TO CLANG. Now TWO BELLS are going; outside in the corridor SHOUTS can be heard...running feet. Conan throws himself mightily against the bars once more.

ANGLE - WINDOW BARS

Mortar chips away from the joint of bars to window sill; the bars begin to shake loose as Conan slams into them again and again.

ANGLE - BEDCHAMBER DOOR

FISTS hammer on it from the other side; the latch is rattled; but the locking bolt is secure. Now the door vibrates as several bodies slam into it from the other side, shouts echoing through the wood: "Magistrate...Magistrate Luda..."

ANGLE - CONAN

Shoulder raw, he hits the bars again, and this time they rattle in their sockets. They twist, bending outward. He puts both hands on them, hunches his shoulders, and PUSES with all his strength--

ANGLE - BEDCHAMBER DOOR

—sags on its hinges, the wood tearing around the bolt; another impact, and it smashes inward, SEVERAL GUARDS in armor tumbling through. Other GUARDS with BOWS appear from the corridor behind them.

ANGLE - CONAN

The bars give way; he throws them outward and dives through the opening as arrows whistle past, barely missing him.

EXT. LUDA'S PALACE

The guards at the entrance crumple as Conan lands on them, feet first. ONE tries to get back up. Conan cuts him down with a slash of his knife, then darts off into the darkness as shouts from above follow a flight of arrows—and he's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUNTAIN GARDEN - CLOSE

on the MAGICAL IMAGE, which shows Conan dodging down an alley into THE MAZE. The WOMAN IN WHITE's hand comes into view, stirring the waters. Conan's image disappears, to be replaced by that of a white-gowned DAGOTEIAN PRIEST, obviously of high rank. He has benign, fatherly features.

ANGLE - WOMAN IN WHITE

She puts back her hood. She is young, virginal, as fresh as spring dew. Her name is ATALI. It would be hard to imagine a more innocent and idealistic believer in any religion.

ATALI
I've found the one you
sought, father. He's
strong...but he seems so
rough, so crude...more
like an animal than a
true man.

ANGLE - ATALI AND POOL

The priest's VOICE has a hollow sound, like an echo at the bottom of a well. His image flickers in the pool, but even so the resemblance between father and daughter is obvious. His name is KARANTHES.

KARANTHES

It is not for us to judge
the fitness of the tool,
my child...only to use it
well in the cause of the
Dreaming One.

ATALI

Father, I hate this
place... these people.
When can I return to the
temple?

KARANTHES

Time is short; the hour
of His coming draws near.
We must each fulfill the
task given to us. May
Dagoth watch over you.

ATALI

And over you, my father.

She touches the water, and the priest's image shatters amid the
ripples.

CUT TO:

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Conan's fist slams down on a slop-stained tabletop; his fingers
open, and Luda's purse tumbles to the wood, coins spilling in a
glittering heap. Conan roars with delight; around him the drunken
revelers cheer.

CONAN

Drinks for everyone, by
Crom!

ANGLE - TANKARDS OF ALE

Wenches pass out myriad of tankards and goblets of ale and mead to
grasping, cheering thieves, men and women. One tankard ends in
the hand of a hard-eyed prostitute named MURIELA who presses close
against Conan, peering over his shoulder, eyeing the coins on the
table with interest. She's dressed skimpily, but has a rough,
well-rouged appeal.

ANGLE - TAVERN DOOR

It opens as Atali and the Eunuch, STRABO, pass through. She sees
Conan across the room, wets her lips nervously, uncertainly.
Looks to the Eunuch for support, direction; he glances from her to
the Cimmerian pointedly. Atali pulls her robe about her, heaves a

deep breath, starts forward through the mob.

ANGLE - CONAN

Conan enjoys himself hugely, grabbing a tankard—and suddenly pauses, gazing at the coins, face growing more sombre. Abruptly he slams his fist down on the table. The crowd falls silent, sensing his barbarian mood. Conan gestures with his tankard to make a toast.

CONAN

He was a foul-smelling
Hyrkanian bastard...a son
of a bitch who'd stab his
mother for the gold in
her teeth. But he could
fight like a cornered
wolf, and he feared
nothing and no man.

(lifts the tankard)

Subotai.

Around him, others drink the toast, murmuring "Subotai" to each other. Some merely shrug their shoulders; the name means nothing to them. Conan drinks the whole tankard in one long pull, slams it down empty on the table.

CONAN

(bellowing)

More ale! Must a man die
of thirst?

The crowd of thieves and wenches goes back to noisy carousing.

ANGLE - ATALI

She seems to be rehearsing a speech sub-vocally as she pushes through the throng, almost reaching Conan's table. But before she can approach him, the hard-eyed MURIELA cuts her off with a quick motion, slipping between Atali and the barbarian, and jamming an elbow into Atali's ribs.

MURIELA

(hard whisper as
Atali gasps for
breath)

Find your own, sweetmeat.
The big one's mine.

ANGLE - CONAN

Grabs another tankard, drinks it down, as MURIELA presses closer to him, twining her arm around him. Conan, in an expansive mood, eyes her appreciatively, then motions to the barkeep.

CONAN

Barkeep! Another drink
for this...lady.

MURIELA

(smiles, cuddling)
That accent...Where do
you hail from?

CONAN

Cimmeria.

MURIELA

(pretending to like
the sound)
Cimmeria. That's up
north someplace, isn't
it?

(Conan nods, drinks)

You want company?

Conan sees her glancing sideways at his leather purse, its coins
spilling onto the table. He scoops them up in one neat motion,
into his belt, and drinks another tankard of ale. She watches him.
He wipes foam from his lips, grins at her.

ANGLE - ATALI

holding her side, catching her breath as she watches this, men and
women moving in from either side to block her view as we

CUT TO:

INT. MURIELA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Muriela pulls Conan in through the door to her shabby, gaudily-
furnished upper floor room. Yards and yards of cheap fabric adorn
the walls and furniture, such as it is: lounging pillows losing
their stuffing, many small obscene wooden idols on shelves smoking
with incense, colored lanterns and candles, all glimmering in the
light breeze from a half-open shuttered window.

MURIELA

I want to get one thing
straight...I don't do
Kushite.

As she's about to shut the door, another would-be CUSTOMER, in
merchant's robes, tries to push in; she shoves him back.

MURIELA

Later. Can't you see I'm
busy?

MURIELA (CONT'D)

(back to Conan,
pouring him a drink
from a flask)

Half a crown, and I'll
give you a night that
will haunt your dreams
forever...

During this, there's a moan from behind a curtain of straggling veils. She keeps talking, pulls the curtains back to reveal two TWIN KHITANS blearily blinking at the light, empty goblets in hand.

MURIELA

(impatiently)

You paid for an hour, not
for all night. Get out.

Heaves them out—as that same eager MERCHANT tries to get in the door again.

MURIELA

I said later. I have
company.

She glances over her shoulder at Conan, bends forward to whisper something in the customer's ear. He nods, backs out in a hurry. Turning, back to the door, she locks it and tucks the key into her belt, grinning at Conan, who's been taking all of this in with an amused expression. She saddles toward him, disrobing, and bends to blow out a candle. Looking up from the candle, her face partially in shadow, her eyes glitter in the dimming light...

CUT TO:

INT. MURIELA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A nude Conan lies snoring, belching in his sleep, tangled in a mass of shabby bedclothes, surrounded by empty jugs of wine. His clothes lie scattered around the room, his scabbard, his dagger all visible, but not his sword. He rolls over, muttering sleepily, and knocks over a half-full tankard that puddles out on the matted floor, toward Muriela's feet. Standing, she throws a dirty robe over her nude body and rushes quietly to a shuttered window. She glances back at Conan, then opens the window and peers down into the street below.

EXT. MAZE STREET - NIGHT - MURIELA'S POV

Two stories down, in the narrow muddy street, stands a platoon of CITY GUARDS, about ten men in leather armor, bearing spears. The

PLATOON SERGEANT urinates against the tavern's wall; he tucks it in as MURIELA HISSES at him from her window.

ANGLE - MURIELA'S WINDOW

A foot-wide ledge runs along the wall directly under the window. Muriela, leaning out, beckons urgently to the men below.

CUT TO:

INT. MURIELA'S ROOM - CLOSE ON CONAN

as his eyes slit open warily; a SHADOW falls over him.

ANGLE - HIS HAND

reaching stealthily under the bedclothes to tighten around the hilt of his sword--

WIDE ANGLE - CONAN

--comes roaring up out of bed, naked, swinging his sword, tossing the bedclothes aside into the face of one CITY GUARDSMAN as he cuts down another. He's fully surrounded by the GUARDSMEN; Muriela cringes at the rear of the room, screaming, as Conan plows yelling into three of the spearmen, including the platoon sergeant, carrying all three backward through the hall door.

INT. TAVERN - PIT

With a crash of breaking wood, Conan and the three guardsmen plunge through the second floor balcony and land in the pit, which is already occupied by two armed pit fighters--including the SHEMITE Conan beat earlier in the evening. The same half-blind bookie is at pitside, and he now starts taking bets on Conan as the Cimmerian, half-drunk and staggering, tears through the three guardsmen in a spectacular display of sword versus spear.

Partway through the fight, the Shemite, recognising Conan, tries to grab him; but Conan heaves him into the platoon sergeant. Both men crash into the remaining pit fighter, and the crowd throws a wild cheer.

ANGLE - TAVERN

Conan lunges from the pit, ducking as two more GUARDSMEN rush into view, thrusting with spears. He grabs their extended spears and yanks them into the pit behind him, whirls and picks up a roasting BOAR from the hearth--to the consternation of the sweating cook--and uses it as a battering ram to knock down the remaining guards.

ANGLE - MURIELA

watching from the second-story balcony, is obviously terrified that Conan might turn on her now.

ANGLE - CONAN

But Conan is almost blind with drink, and after staggering about for a moment--passing ATALI and STRABO, the Eunuch, who sit watching him from that same dark corner--he sees the door to the street and runs toward it.

ANGLE - CONAN'S FOOT

trips on a puddle of ale.

ANGLE - CONAN

goes crashing spectacularly into the doorjamb, headfirst.

ANGLE - MURIELA

sighing with relief, turns toward her room--and finds herself face to face with a Dagothian priest, who steps from the shadows at the top of the stairs.

PRIEST

You have made an enemy
this night, woman.

Muriela shrinks back, hand to mouth, eyes wild. The priest steps by her, emotionless, and moves down the stairs, back into shadow. Muriela looks down toward the fallen figure of Conan O.S.

ANGLE - CONAN

Unconscious, his forehead bloody, GUARDSMEN standing over him. In the background, several other guards stagger upright, help their wounded comrades. A droplet of blood from Conan's brow hit the wooden floor as we

CUT TO:

INT. SHADIZAR PRISON CORRIDOR - DAWN

SOUNDS of a whip being applied to flesh echo through the dank stone corridors of the prison, as Atali follows a WARDEN to a cell. The cell is reached down a flight of stone steps; the door is open, and the WHIPPING SOUNDS come from within. Atali follows the warden through the door.

INT. CONAN'S CELL - DAWN - ATALI'S POV

Gray light streams through a high, narrow barred window, onto the sweating, scarred back of a huge BALD TURNKEY. The turnkey grunts as he whips someone out of view; there is no sound from his subject.

At last, he puts up his whip and looks around, and now his body no longer blocks Atali's view of the cell's occupant: it's Conan, chained to the wall, in a ragged prison loincloth, his half-naked body striped with bleeding lash-marks. He gazes without emotion past the turnkey at the warden, who steps into view, gesturing at Atali.

WARDEN

His wife. Five minutes.

The warden sets down a small hourglass, its sands already flowing.

ANGLE - CONAN AND ATALI

Warden and turnkey leave, the turnkey eyeing Atali lustfully. She shrinks away, veil up to conceal her face. Conan listens for the sound of the bolt sliding shut on the cell door before glancing at Atali skeptically. She, in turn, studies him uneasily, as one would who finds herself alone with a wolf. But there is still something about her attitude, a sense of haughty superiority combined with innocence, that seems to dare him to touch her.

CONAN

A wife is something a man remembers... when he has one.

ATALI

Do you want to live, barbarian?

Conan looks up, alert.

CONAN

All men want to live.

ATALI

Swear to help me in a certain task, and not only will you live...you will gain a treasure beyond imagination.

CONAN

(eyeing her)
You think highly of yourself, don't you?

Startled, unaccustomed to such a remark, she almost slips her veil. Behind it, she blushes. Like an adolescent caught out playing an adult.

ATALI

That's not what I mean.

CONAN

What sort of treasure, then?

ATALI

Does it matter?

CONAN

(glancing at his chains)

Not much. All right, woman, we have a bargain. The question is, do you have a key?

ATALI

Better than that.

From her gown she brings forth a flask of blue liquid, which she pours over the iron manacles on Conan's wrists. A SIZZLE--the liquid is ACID, and the iron BURNS THROUGH enough for Conan to wrench the chains loose. The chains clank to the ground, and Conan stares at his wrists, rubbing them. He winces, with momentary pain, as the movement starts the lashmarks on his back bleeding, then shrugs it off.

CONAN

(greatly suspicious)

Nice trick. Are you a witch?

ATALI

It was acid, no more. I have horses outside the city gates. Give me a few moments, then follow.

She goes to the cell door, leaving Conan in shadow. At her rap, the Warden returns to let her out. The door creaks shut behind her. Conan continues to stare down at his hands, examining them, until the door creaks open again, and HEAVY FOOTSTEPS approach. The bald Turnkey comes forward, slapping his palm with the whip's thick leather handle, grinning. His smile fades as his eyes go to Conan's chains...now lying at the Cimmerian's feet.

Conan looks up at the Turnkey with a slow, wolfish grin.

CUT TO:

INT. MURIELA'S ROOM - DAWN

A plump ZAMORIAN MERCHANT huffs away on top of her as MURIELA feigns passion. She glances over his shoulder to check the time on an hourglass set on the table beside them; the sands are running out. She cries out in faked ecstasy, clutching the plump man's shoulders.

Suddenly, there is a soft thunk O.S., and the merchant collapses unconscious on top of her. Muriela, puzzled, looks over his shoulder, and her eyes widen in surprise—

MURIELA'S POV - CONAN

Conan looms over the merchant, hefting the Turnkey's whip; he's just struck the man's head with the handle. Now he tosses the whip aside—

ANGLE - ROOM

—and as Muriela screams, Conan heaves the unconscious merchant off her and scoops her up under one arm.

MURIELA

(shrieking)

Please, no...the City
Guards made me betray
you...I swear by Mitra, I
was afraid...

Conan reaches under the bedclothes with his free hand and pulls out a cloth pouch jingling with coins. He shakes it for her to hear.

CONAN

And well paid, too.

MURIELA

(trying to bargain)

The Priests... the
Priests of Dagoth... I
can tell you what they
said... They have an
interest in you,
Cimmerian...

Conan hefts her more securely under his arm, ignoring her as he stalks to the window. Muriela sees it's no use.

MURIELA

(screaming,
terrified)

You're going to kill me!
No...No, please....help!
Help, murder!

The girl's shrieks grow more and more desperate. Shaking his head, as if disappointed, Conan steps out through the half-shuttered window.

EXT. TAVERN LEDGE - DAWN

Conan carries the shrieking girl along the ledge, free hand touching the tavern wall for balance, sure-footed as a mountain goat.

CLOSE - MURIELA

wide-eyed, horrified, screaming at the top of her lungs--

MURIELA'S POV - THE STREET

two stories below, hard cobbles glistening in the morning light. A cluster of STREET URCHINS point up at her; other STREET PEOPLE gather in the street to look up, shading their eyes. AN OLD WOMAN sells fruit to the watchers, who munch away like observers at a cock fight.

ANGLE - CONAN AND MURIELA

Conan walks along the ledge, studying the ground below OUT OF FRAME, as if looking for just the right spot. The girl is hysterical now, frantic, pleading.

MURIELA

Don't kill me...please,
I'll do anything...I know
love-secrets...I can
please you...don't kill
me!

Her voice rises to a shriek as he swings her up overhead, and heaves her outward. She screams, falling OUT OF FRAME, and then her scream is cut off by a loud sucking splash. Silence for a beat, and then her VOICE OS:

MURIELA(OS)

You bastard...you black-
hearted barbarian
bastard!

EXT. PIG STY - DAWN

Half-buried in mud and slops, Muriela sprawls in a sty surrounded by grunting pigs. Her screams are furious, raging, all fear forgotten. She's a sight.

MURIELA

Damn you! I'd do it
again, you hear me? I'd
sell you again, you
bastard--

She doesn't quite finish, as one of the largest hogs covers her face with a slurping kiss.

EXT. TAVERN LEDGE

Conan throws back his head, hands on hips, and roars with laughter.

EXT. TAVERN STREET - DAWN

So do the street people, the urchins, and the old woman, her toothless mouth wide in a raucous cackle. Down the street, at a full clanking run, come the CITY GUARDS, the same patrol which captured Conan earlier; bruised, battered, and bandaged. Their sergeant points up at the window ledge where Conan is standing--

EXT. TAVERN LEDGE

--he and the guards notice each other at the same instant. Conan immediately takes a running leap off the ledge--

ANGLE - TAVERN SIGN

--and catching hold of the tavern sign, about fifteen feet below and ahead, swings out over the heads of the startled guardsmen, landing on the backboard of a fruit cart just beyond them. He gathers up the reins of the rearing draft horse that pulls the cart; snaps them, with a wild shout. And as the guardsmen run after him and the citizens scatter, he takes off through the winding streets at breakneck speed.

CUT TO:

EXT. INNER CITY WALL - DAY

Conan careens around a corner in the cart. It hits a market stall stand under the wall of the city, turns over. He lands with a roll, is on his feet and looking about for a way over the wall even as SHOUTS and CRIES from the direction of the city gate warn

him that the guards there have spotted him. Around him are stalls, merchants, people buying food and cloth—all reacting to his presence.

A whispered HISS catches his attention. He looks around, sees a ROPE dangling from the wall near him. He runs toward it, leaps, half-runs up the wall about ten feet, grabbing the rope and scrambling the rest of the distance with a mountaineer's ease. Above him, someone ducks back out of view on a low roof near the wall—someone in a WHITE ROBE. A priest? Conan can't tell, and neither can we. He reaches the top of the wall, swings over it easily, and drops from view.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY GATE - DAWN

Atali and Strabo wait with three stallions, each white as bone china, near the huge fortress-like gates of Shadizar...reacting to the SOUNDS OF CONFUSION inside the gates, the SHOUTS, the CRASH of the cart going over. Atali looks around in confusion, startled—

—and CONAN drops onto the ground before her, from the wall, landing as silently as a great dark-maned cat. Strabo tosses him a bundle of clothes wrapped by a scabbard belt.

ATALI

(as Conan quickly
pulls a tunic over
his head, strapping
on the scabbard)

Where have you been?

CONAN

Paying a debt...

(tucks jingling
pouch into his
belt)

...and collecting a
profit. Well, I see
you've got good taste in
horseflesh.

He mounts the largest stallion, swinging into the saddle easily. The horse shifts about under him until he calms it with a friendly pat. Atali mounts her own horse sidesaddle. Strabo swings grunting onto his.

CONAN

Which way, and how far?

ATALI

East...three days travel.

CONAN

Three days...and three
nights.

ATALI

(again blushing,
trying to be aloof)
Understand one thing,
barbarian. I am Atali,
daughter of Karanthes...
and I am not part of the
bargain we made. Strabo
will see to that.

She indicates Strabo, who stares unmovingly at them both.

CONAN

(ironically)
Your lover?

ATALI

(flushing)
My...protector. A mute,
though his sword speaks
eloquently for him.
(at Conan's raised
eyebrow)
Also a eunuch.

Conan looks around sharply, as SOUNDS OF RUNNING MEN are heard on the wall above, drawing near. He reins his horse about, to see the city gate slowly creaking open. The SOUNDS OF MEN AND HORSES from inside...much commotion.

CONAN

Well, if he wants to keep
what little is left of
him, he'd better get
moving.

He gives a wild steppe-rider's cry, reining about, Atali matching him. They gallop off down the dusty ROAD OF KINGS. Strabo whips his mount after them, as MUSIC RISES to a crescendo, the three riders quickly lost in distance and dust.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROAD OF KINGS - NOON

The ROAD OF KINGS winds through a green mountain canyon and down through the center of a valley that opens to a wide plain beyond. The Road is visible, stretching for miles, like the ancient roads

of Rome, marked by crumbling milestones, here and there fallen into disrepair, elsewhere completely lost beneath high growth, finally rising again from the grass to crest a ridge, catching the rays of the sun and shining like gold.

Along this road ride three figures on horseback: Conan in the lead, Atali close behind, Strabo not far behind her. Atali's white robes flutter in the breeze. They come out of the green pass and pause, looking down across the valley to the plains.

CONAN

The Road of Kings. They
say it was built by
giants in the days when
the earth was young.
(looks at her)
Do you believe that?

Atali draws her veil around her arms, as if chilled by the breeze, and shakes her head. Before the cloth covers it, a RED BIRTHMARK is visible on her forearm, vaguely shaped like an eye. Conan notices it but gives no sign.

CONAN

Neither do I.

He gallops forward, Atali and Strabo following. They go down into the Valley, toward the plains.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PLAINS - SUNSET

Conan, Atali and Strabo ride across the plains as the sun melts crimson on the horizon beyond them. Strabo whips his horse to keep up.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PLAINS - CAMP - NIGHT

A fire sends smoke and sparks into the night. Conan lies beside it, stirring the embers, staring through the flames at Atali sleeping beside her horse. She turns in her sleep, clutching a small knife which gleams in the firelight.

Above her, Strabo sits guard, impassive, a grim Buddha.

ANGLE - CONAN

face ruddy in the firelight, smiling wryly. He turns over to go to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LOWLANDS - DAY

They ride north, leaving the Road as it continues east. Their path takes them across the lowlands toward a leagues-distant forest.

ANGLE - THE RIDERS

Strabo sways sleeping in his saddle as he rides. Conan, glancing back and noting this as he rides near Atali, shakes his head. She follows his glance, answers the unspoken criticism.

ATALI

He's awake when he needs
to be.

CONAN

(unimpressed)
How far to this treasure?

ATALI

You'll know soon enough.

CONAN

I want to know now.

ATALI

Does the sword need to
understand the hand that
wields it?

Stung by this insult, Conan makes a grab for Atali. Instantly, a SWORD swishes gleaming down between them, only an inch from Conan's fingers. Recoiling, drawing his own blade, Conan reins in and whirls about--

--to face Strabo, fully awake and alert, his sword ready. He glares silently, mirthlessly at Conan, prepared for battle if battle there must be.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LOWLANDS - TRAVELING SHOT

on a wild rabbit darting through the grass, as an arrow brings it down.

ANGLE - CONAN

off his horse, picks up the arrow with the rabbit dangling from its point. He offers it to Atali, who recoils in delicate

disgust.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOWLANDS CAMP - NIGHT

Conan wolfs down his portion of the rabbit, broiled on a stick over the campfire, as Atali picks at hers. Grease smudges her white gown; she brushes at herself, dismayed. Conan watches her with amusement from the corner of his eye. Strabo moves between them heavily, sits down. Conan snorts in annoyance. Atali notices, smiles coquettishly.

ATALI

He's quite strong.
Before he entered my
father's service, Strabo
worshipped with a pagan
sect in Zamboula. He
strangled children for
holy sacrifice.

(looks at Strabo
with obvious
distaste; then at
Conan)

What pagan gods do you
worship, barbarian?

He just looks at her.

ATALI

Our god is blessed
Dagoth, the Dreaming One.

CONAN

Those white-robed monks
back in Shadizar... your
people?

----- ATALI

(nods)

Dagoth is good and kind,
and in his worship, we do
good works. We feed the
poor and bury the dead.
All this we do in honor
of our god.

CONAN

My god is Crom. He
breathes life into a man
when he's born, he makes
him strong, and then he's
done with you.

ATALI

How do you pray to your
god, barbarian?

CONAN

(shakes his head)

Best not to call on him,
for if he takes notice of
you, he will send you
only doom from his high
mountain.

ATALI

He sounds cruel.

CONAN

All gods are cruel. What
do they care about men?

She looks at him with sad, hurt eyes, pitingly. Conan shakes his head, and continues eating.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Slivers of light poke between the high trees, fading to grey as they reach the ground. Ground mist is calf deep. The horses' hooves squelch in mulch-covered mud. Conan, Atali and Strabo lead their horses between the trees, on foot. Strabo keeps sinking into the mud, splashing about frantically, too heavy for the soft footing. Conan watches him, amused. Then Atali gasps as her slippered foot slides into a muddy patch of ground, ankle deep. Conan starts forward to help her out, but Strabo interposes himself...lifts her onto her saddle, and guides both horses forward, holding their reins. Conan, cut off, follows with barely suppressed rage.

CONAN'S POV - THE FOREST

Ground mist, light, distant splashings. Ahead, the trees thin out as the ground drops away into swampland.

ANGLE - CONAN

glances questioningly at Atali.

ATALI

(whispering)

Not much further.

He nods, they move on.

EXT. THE LAKE - DAWN

A fawn treads carefully at the water's edge, on a small island of grass and roots. Its head dips to the water; and as it drinks, SOMETHING slithers from the water, ropey and grey as an elephant's trunk, but impossibly long. It makes hardly a ripple as it breaks the surface of the lake, snaps around the fawn, and draws it into the water, thrashing. The fawn bleats, disappears under the water. A moment later, all is still.

EXT. LAKE SHORE - DAWN

Some distance away from the small island where the fawn vanished, Conan, Atali and Strabo come out of the trees. About a hundred yards away along the shore, there is a STABLE, where horses can be heard snorting softly, pacing. A dock runs from the stable to the lakeshore. But here the shore is muddy, grassy ground still wreathed in fog.

Conan tethers his horse to a gnarled-looking tree and goes to lift Atali down. Strabo is there before him again, and they meet each others eyes in a cold silent exchange. Strabo lifts Atali down, tethers their horses, then joins Conan and Atali at the shore. Together they all look out across the lake.

EXT. YARA'S TEMPLE - DAWN

About a hundred yards from shore, the dawn mist slowly clears about a structure rising from the center of the lake. It is a TEMPLE, multi-tiered, rising sheer from the water with no land around it, crouching on the surface like an insect. Visible at the base of the structure, to one side, is an arched opening to a boat dock within the walls. Water laps the walls of this opening; there seems no other.

EXT. LAKE SHORE

Conan stares at this incredulously, as Atali takes a folded, ancient bit of parchment from her purse. She makes a sacred gesture toward the temple, to ward off evil. Shivers, steals herself to examine the parchment. Strabo watches from beside them. They all speak softly, aware of the nearby stable.

CONAN

That's where the treasure
is?

ATALI

In a chamber at the heart
of the temple.

CONAN

Guarded?

ATALI

No, not the treasure chamber itself. They don't need guards.

CONAN

(doesn't like the sound of this)

Why not?

ATALI

No one has told me. Here. Look at this.

He peers over her shoulder at the paper, which is a kind of blueprint in faded ink on crumbling yellowed parchment.

ATALI

(continued)

That archway leads to a boat dock. Beyond, the lake water washes through a sewage pipe. At this point, there's an opening into the pipe. The treasure chamber is directly above that opening.

Conan takes the parchment. It crumbles in his hands. The fragments drift like leaves onto the water at his feet.

CONAN

(disgusted)

Tell me the truth, woman. Is there a treasure, or have the gods made you mad?

ATALI

There is a treasure. A treasure beyond value...and you shall share in it. If you dare.

He studies her, then looks out across the water. Finally grunts and begins stripping off his furs, his swordbelt.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LAKE - DAY

Mist curls across the surface. Conan, stripped and greased to protect himself from the cold, swims toward the Temple. His sword is strapped across his back, his knife between his teeth; his hair is held back from his eyes by a leather band.

EXT. LAKE SHORE

Atali stands with the horses, clutching herself against the cold, shivering as she follows the barbarian's progress.

EXT. THE LAKE - UNDERWATER VIEW

Conan's huge form is silhouetted against the surface, seen from below. He takes long easy, confident strokes, saving his strength for the thievery ahead.

SOMETHING MOVES across our field of vision, too shadowy to see clearly.

ANGLE - CONAN

Suddenly he stops, listening. Behind him, there is a soft splash. He looks around sharply, sees only mist and fog. Another splash, nearer. He takes a deep breath, ducks his head under the water.

UNDERWATER VIEW - CONAN

peers through the darkness underwater, searching--starts, as he sees something below O.S.

ANGLE - CONAN

breaks surface, spraying water, and throws himself forward, swimming toward the temple with desperate speed.

UNDERWATER VIEW - CONAN

SOMETHING ROPEY and grey reaches for his kicking legs; it is the same ropery, tentacular THING that caught the fawn at the lakeside. It loops out, wraps around Conan's ankle--and tugs.

ANGLE - CONAN

He goes under, yanked from below.

UNDERWATER VIEW - CONAN

takes the knife from between his teeth and slashes through the ropery tentacle wrapping his ankle. BRACKISH ICHOR pours from the amputated limb; it thrashes away into the depths.

ANGLE - CONAN

swims on, passing through the archway into the temple structure.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE BOAT DOCK - DAY

A covered vaguely Gothic stone dock, inside the temple structure. Several boats, almost Egyptian in design, with high prows and wide midships, nudge the stone wharf, rising and falling as the lakewater laps against the wharf and against a broad flight of stone steps leading down from a double-arched doorway. This doorway must lead into the main building itself; is covered by an IRON GATE that can be raised or lowered by winches manned from the stairs. Conan is on the lake side of the gate; he ducks underwater, and a moment later comes up again on the boat dock side.

Two robed and armored GUARDS stand duty on the stairs, one of them beside the winch. Both guards are black, huge warriors from Kush. Neither notices Conan, who swims across the narrow dock area, keeping to the shadows, heading toward the low triangular entrance to the sewage pipe, where the currents seem strong, as if sucking down into a whirlpool.

ANGLE - SEWAGE PIPE ENTRANCE

The currents are strong. Conan inhales deeply, dives, letting them sweep him along.

INT. PIPE - DAY

Conan is sucked down, with the current, through a sloping pipe barely wide enough for his body. The walls of the pipe are eroded stone, black and slick. He bashes into one wall, rebounds, catches himself and when he sees, ahead, the pipe making a U-turn straight down, he's ready for it.

ANGLE - CONAN

curving through the underwater U-joint; at the bottom of the joint, in a natural basin, whitened human bones and battered skulls can be seen—briefly. Then Conan is past, rising again.

INT. DRAIN - DAY

The pipe passes under a grilled drain: this is the entrance to the chamber Atali indicated on her parchment map. As Conan reaches this cylindrical hole, he reaches out, grabs an edge of the cylinder, and pulls himself back toward the drain by sheer brute strength. The pipe, at this point, is ten feet across, and the

current is considerably weaker. But it's still a tremendous effort, and when Conan finally pulls himself into the drain and lifts his head above the level of the water filling the pipe, he gasps for breath.

ANGLE - CONAN

studies the drain around him. It's a vertical cylinder about five feet wide by ten feet long, with the sewer pipe at one end and a massive rusting grate at the other. Bracing his back against the wall of the cylinder, his feet pushing outward in front of him, Conan climbs up the cylinder to the grate, alternately sliding his back up, then his feet, then his back.

INT. LEECH CHAMBER - DAY - CLOSE

on the grate which fills the drain at the very base of this inverted-cone chamber. Conan's fingers reach up through the wide grate links, feeling for purchase. The grate is actually a circular plug of iron fitted onto the top of the cylinder, not mortared in place. Conan's groping fingers slide over several dozen BLACK LEECHES, finger-sized, which squirm at his touch; he brushes them aside, grips, and heaves upward.

ANGLE - CONAN

The grate creaks, groans, finally rips upward, encrusted matter along its rim scraping away, chunks of it pelting Conan, including dozens of dislodged leeches. He heaves the grate up until it totters over with a clang, clearing the drain. Then he clambers over the side of the drain, rolling to his feet at the base of the inverted cone chamber. Soft things squish under his sandaled feet. He looks down.

CONAN'S POV - LEECHES

Thousands of small black leeches cover the chamber floor, crawling over and through the skeletal remains of various animals--mostly deers, several dogs, and at least two humans. Leeches cover one human skull. Conan's foot kicks it, sends it rolling away to the base of the chamber wall.

ANGLE - CONAN

looks around him. Light filters down from an opening above, dimly showing HUNDREDS OF SMALL HOLES, toe- and hand-sized around the inward-sloping base of this oddly-shaped room. The narrowest part of the chamber is at the bottom; it widens outward until it is about thirty feet across near the top, forty feet overhead. Small holes cover the lower portion of the walls; the holes grow progressively larger as they go up the walls, until lost in deep shadow near the top. Conan's gaze reaches up past shadows and holes to the ceiling.

ANGLE - THE CEILING

From a circular open hole in the very center of the ceiling, directly above the drain, a CHAIN dangles into the chamber. About ten feet down from the ceiling, a metal CAGE sways at the end of the chain. Inside the cage is a shiny BLACK METAL CHEST.

ANGLE - CONAN

He eyes the chest above O.S. greedily. Turning his attention to the walls, he starts to climb, using the holes for hand- and foot-holds. As he climbs, his back comes into view. It's covered with about a dozen small leeches each an inch across.

ANGLE - CONAN

Climbing. He reaches up for a hold over his head, and from the corner of his eye sees, on his extended arm--

CONAN'S POV - HIS ARM

--a LEECH the size of his fist, pulsating as it SUCKS at him.

ANGLE - CONAN

grimacing with disgust, he grabs the leech, tries to tear it off.

CONAN

Crom!

But when his hand clenches, the leech, gorged to bursting, erupts in his fist, spattering him with blood. His own blood.

ANGLE - CONAN'S HAND

gripping one of the slightly larger holes for support. From within the hole, another fist-sized LEECH slithers out, touching his fingers.

ANGLE - CONAN

looks up, recoils automatically. Losing his grip, he almost slides down the side of the wall. He catches himself, but now THREE of the fist-sized leeches are on his shoulders. He cuts them off with his knife, blood spurting. Scrambling, he climbs up the wall face quickly. Ahead of him are holes the size of watermelon

ANGLE - LARGER HOLE

Something rears inside the shadowy hole--a huge LEECH, at least a foot long. It slithers outward--

ANGLE - CONAN

He grunts in surprise as the thing lands on his chest. It begins

to throb, and the sudden shock of pain tears a CRY from his throat. He grabs the thing with two hands, rips it free. Bloody suckers leave their mark on his bare breast. He looks around; another foot-long leech has appeared in another of the holes. He stabs at it with his knife, scrambles up to the next level of holes, drawing his sword. Knife in one hand, sword in the other, body spattered with blood.

ANGLE - THREE-FOOT LONG LEECH

Heaving from its hole, a LEECH the size of a small dog quivers near Conan's head as he climbs to the next level. He sees it, cuts it in two with a stroke of his sword in the same instant. Greenish fluid sprays his face and chest.

ANGLE - CONAN

Crouched on a narrow ledge on this, the level second-from-the-top, he looks up, wild-eyed, sword gripped in both hands...

CONAN'S POV - THE HIGHEST LEVEL

The holes on the highest level, directly opposite the dangling chain with its caged treasure box, are five feet high and six feet across. In the shadows at the rear of the nearest hole, something shiny and moist shivers and moves forward, as if scenting food.

WIDE ANGLE - THE CHAMBER

Conan is on the level just under the one with the largest holes—and, by extension, the largest leeches. The only way he can reach the dangling chain is to leap from one of the large holes. He stands panting, studying the situation, as LEECHES of varying sizes converge on him, slithering over each other, squirming and pulsating as they gather round his feet.

ANGLE - CONAN

becomes aware of the leeches crawling around him. He kicks at them, slashes at them with his sword, his instincts aroused, reflexes in charge, going wild with fury, cutting, slashing, thrusting--

ANGLE - LARGEST HOLE

--as, from the shadows of the largest hole, a quivering BLACK LEECH the size of a man swells into view. Its black shiny surface is covered with hundreds of the smaller leeches, living off it in parasitic symbiosis. It raises up, and its underside is exposed. Suckers and an insect-like mandible drip green mucus as the leech sways toward Conan's naked back. The leech strains forward--

ANGLE - CONAN

--and Conan sees its SHADOW cast by the light through the opening

overhead, on the sloping wall below him. He whirls, thrusting upward with his sword--

ANGLE - CONAN & GIANT LEECH

--and the sword pierces the giant leech through its open mandible. Mucus pours out over the blade, over Conan's hands. The creature heaves upward in its death agony, and Conan, holding the sword's hilt, is swung upward with it. A last tremor snaps the giant leech about, and Conan is flung from his sword like a bit of mud from a horse's tail.

ANGLE - CONAN

grabs out, catching the dangling chain. He holds tight, swinging about as he watches--

CONAN'S POV - THE LEECH

It quivers, dying; fluid gushes from its wound, and at last it spills sideways out of its hole, eight feet long, and rolls wetly down the sloping wall to crash into the drain, where it slides to from view, disappearing down the drain with a splash.

ANGLE - CHAIN

Conan looks from the drain to the caged treasure box. Taking his knife from between his teeth, applies it to the cage. The bars twist apart easily. He pulls the box out; it's not very large. An intricate pattern of diamond chips covers the box's sleek black surface. He tucks it into his belt. Looks down, toward the drain, shakes his head, and looks up along the chain toward the smokey torchlight coming from above.

CUT TO:

INT. SPIRAL STAIRWAY CHAMBER - DAY

The chain rises through a circle in a BRASS FLOOR, continuing straight up the center of a long-narrow room circled by a spiral staircase of black iron. The staircase winds around and around the inner walls of the room, up two stories, to a narrow balcony. The door from the balcony is the only exit or entrance to the room--not counting the circular opening in the brass floor, of course. Torches are set in braziers at intervals along the staircase.

Conan's head appears through the opening; he peers about. The room is deserted. Swiftly, he climbs hand-over-hand up the chain, and steps off the chain onto the brass floor. He listens for a moment, hears nothing, and starts up the spiral stairs.

ANGLE - CONAN ON STAIRS

As he goes around and around, up and up, he hears a soft WHISPER above him--what sounds like a whisper, but is actually the soft murmur of voices talking in an undertone, with intense concentration.

CONAN'S POV - THE STAIRS

As the top of the stairs come into view, a balcony area is visible, and beyond it, a partially open door. Light glows golden beyond the door, and the SOFT VOICES are coming from within the room beyond.

INT. BALCONY - CONAN

He crosses the balcony, cat-footed, and pauses outside the door, looking in, listening. His face is lit by golden light. His eyes narrow as his hand goes out, gently pushing the door back and open; he peers within. The VOICES are now clearly audible:

YARA'S VOICE

Good...good, keep
going...you're doing very
well...

CUT TO:

INT. YARA'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS - DAY - CLOSE

on what appears to be A HIVE-LIKE MAZE, seen from above so that the various turnings and deadends are visible; CAMERA PANS DOWN and around the labyrinth, now seen in cutaway like an ant farm. More levels are visible; and moving through this mystical LABYRINTH is a small, human FIGURE.

ANGLE - THE LABYRINTH-----

The figure is that of a boy, YOUNG YARA, wearing the cloak and robe of a mage. Something about him seems not quite substantial, as if he were a little more solid than a ghost.

ANGLE - YOUNG YARA

He comes to a fork in the labyrinth, goes right. Immediately, FLAMES LEAP UP in the opening to the left tunnel. Young Yara goes on without looking back.

CLOSE - YARA

Watching this, from a vantage point as yet unexplained, is a harsh-featured wizard in black: YARA, whose temple this structure

is. He nods encouragement.

YARA

Very good. This is the
furthest you've ever
gone. One more
turning...

ANGLE - YOUNG YARA

In the labyrinth, Young Yara comes to THREE OPENINGS set one on top of another. Each is dark, an uninviting maw. Young Yara hesitates, then crouches, very slowly, and slips into the lowest of the three—

CLOSE - YOUNG YARA

--and SHRIEKS as jagged, serrated claws like the claws of a bear trap snap from the walls around him, about to cut him in two as we instantly

CUT TO:

CLOSE - YOUNG YARA

rearing backward in a chair, eyes wide, shocked, shaking his head as he comes out of a trance. A glowing LIGHT dims in his eyes. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the labyrinth/hive on a jade table in front of him, merely a three-foot high model of some greater structure. YARA stands opposite Young Yara on the other side of the labyrinth/hive, shaking his head sternly. Beyond them, visibly framed in the doorway to the room, is Conan, watching all this intently, wonderingly. He is about to step back.

YARA

You were close...very
close. But you took the
obvious route.

YOUNG YARA

I'm sorry, father...
there's so much to
remember...

He looks at the labyrinth—

YOUNG YARA'S POV - THE LABYRINTH

--and from nowhere, at the entrance to the labyrinth tunnel, the ghostly, insubstantial IMAGE OF YOUNG YARA which was seen earlier reappears, slowly coming into focus.

IMAGE OF YOUNG YARA
(hollow, eerie
voice)

I'll try again...

ANGLE - YOUNG YARA

concentrating, the LIGHT GLOWING IN HIS EYES as he studies the labyrinth, Yara nodding approval. The chamber they are in is crowded with the tools of the mage's trade: scrolls, flasks, an alchemist's furnace, carved demons, jeweled idols, and so forth, all covered with fine dust. There is a heavy, murky quality to the air, a sense of age and death. The statue of an Egyptian-like, ibis-headed god looms above them.

ANGLE - CONAN

In the doorway. He takes a step backward, and as he does, removing his hand from the door, it CREAKS on its hinges.

CLOSE ANGLE - YARA

Yara, leaning forward to watch his son, looks up at the sound of the creaking door. His eyes lock on--

CONAN - YARA'S POV - CLOSE

--as his eyes lock, in turn, on Yara, thief and wizard staring at each other across a room.

ANGLE - YARA

Even as Conan dodges back, the wizard throws himself to his feet, swinging a hand against a BRASS GONG on a tablette beside him, crying out in horror.

YARA
The Eye...!

Young Yara breaks from his trance as the wizard rushes from the table to the door. The boy looks up, LIGHT fading from his eyes--

CUT TO:

INT. BALCONY

Conan, swordless, has only his knife in hand. He looks around, see another arched doorway, this leading to a corridor. He runs toward it. Beyond the exit torches smolder, casting long shadows--

ANGLE - BALCONY DOORWAY

--and the shadows now move toward him, coming into the light: ARMORED FIGURES at a full run, all black--wearing the same armor seen on the black warriors in Shadizar. They carry a variety of weapons from primitive Kush: razor-sharpened bone clubs, serrated boomerangs, odd iron swords with bone hilts. Several heft Kushite spears, feathered around their sharpened tips--called assegais. In the forefront of the group is a six-foot-tall BLACK WOMAN, wearing a red robe from neck to knee. It conceals her torso. Conan backs up, teeth bared, knife in hand. His back is to the open air, the stairwell.

CONAN

Who dies first?

A GUARD charges forward, past the black woman, recklessly. Conan's movements are so quick they're almost impossible to follow. Suddenly the guard is dead, and his sword is in Conan's hand. Conan grins, a wolf at bay, shifting weight from foot to foot, watchful as the black warriors surround him. Tallest of the male warriors, a burly master sergeant type, is a scarred Kushite named IMBALAYO.

Yara and Young Yara have come onto the balcony, and Yara firmly pushes the boy back behind him. Yara's horror has been replaced by rage.

YARA

The Eye...Zula, he has
the Eye of Ibis...!

ANGLE - CONAN

Two more warriors rush him. He dodges ONE WARRIOR's thrusting assegai, grabs the assegai, and smashes the warrior with the butt; swings the point of the assegai in an arc that cuts the throat of a SECOND WARRIOR; pins a THIRD WARRIOR to the wall with the assegai's point, temporarily blocking the other warriors as they push through the arched entrance. IMBALAYO and a stocky, shortish warrior who was obviously interrupted in the middle of a meal, BOMBAATA, start forward together. Imbalayo draws a bone boomerang, Bombaata a pair of short swords. They grin wolfishly--

Suddenly the Black Woman steps forward, almost regal amid the mayhem.

BLACK WOMAN

(commanding)

Imbalayo, Bombaata...
enough. He is mine.

Conan, drawing his own sword, looks at her as if she's mad. She flings aside the concealing robe. Underneath it she wears the armor of a warrior. She is spectacular; her name is ZULA. She

rips the assegai out of a warrior's corpse, kicks the body aside and stands facing Conan, ready for battle.

ANGLE - CONAN AND ZULA

A grim silence drapes the chamber like a shroud. For a long moment Cimmerian and Kushite confront each other. At last, Zula takes a step forward, assegai before her.

CONAN

I don't kill women.

ZULA

Then a woman will kill you.

She takes another step, assegai poised for thrusting. Conan waits with his sword, defensively, ill at ease.

ANGLE - YARA

looks grimly on, eyes burning, Young Yara behind him.

YARA

Zula--gut him!

ANGLE - ZULA

thrusts at Conan's middle. He barely evades her lightning-fast lunge. Imbalayo, Bombaata and the other black warriors look on approvingly. Their own weapons are ready, but they make no move without a command from Zula or Yara.

Zula spins, thrusts again, a daring two-stroke assault almost like a dance which catches Conan off-balance. Her assegai-head grazes his side, draws blood. The Cimmerian is less hurt than startled. This woman fights like a man--and better than most. Not since Valeria has he met an opponent so worthy of his steel. He raises his sword, moves catlike about in front of her; he'll not underestimate her again.

ANGLE - THE BALCONY

Again, Zula thrusts. This time Conan is ready for her. He turns her assegai with his blade. She recovers, spins, clashes again. Their snarling visages come within inches of each other. Break, parry, spin and thrust. Sword to assegai; his superior weight, after a moment, sends her reeling backward and nearly to one knee. Conan grins. This is more like it. From her crouch, Zula reverses the assegai, swats it across Conan's legs like a quarterstaff. He grunts, stumbles backward, and she's up again, the assegai toward him, her face a mask of barely controlled rage.

ANGLE - YARA - CLOSE

YARA
We've no time for this.
Hurl your assegais.

ANGLE - WARRIORS

A tall, skinny warrior with frightfully bad teeth--GOMANI--hefts his spear, others ready their own weapons, ready to toss them past Zula into Conan's heart. Conan sees this.

ANGLE - BALCONY

Conan glances back over his shoulder; he's got nowhere to go. He's at the edge of the balcony. He looks back at the frustrated and furious Zula, at the warriors beyond her about to throw, and grins sardonically. He sheathes his sword, and even as the first assegais fly toward him, he spins and dives backward off the balcony--

TRACKING SHOT - CONAN

An incredible, heart-stopping DIVE: straight off the balcony, down two, three stories past the spiral stairs, toward the narrow circular opening into the Chamber of Leeches. It is a perfect dive--

INT. CHAMBER OF LEECHES

--and it continues down through the opening into the chamber, down through the chamber, down, down--and THROUGH the drain--

INT. SEWAGE PIPE

--down through the drain and into ten feet of fetid, churning water. Conan hits with a force that would kill another, weaker man; his body arcs into the dive, against the current, and sheer momentum carries him down and around the U-joint, past the whitened skeletons. Now he swims against the current, straining every muscle to make headway against the fierce tug of the rushing waters.

INT. SPIRAL STAIRWAY BALCONY

Zula and the other warriors gape after the vanished barbarian in disbelief; she recovers first, charging back the way she came, her warriors, Yara and Young Yara following close behind.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE BOAT DOCK

Conan breaks surface at the triangular drain, gasping for air. He swims to the dock, where the TWO GUARDS are facing the door to the temple, hearing the commotion inside, throwing puzzled glances at each other, wondering what's going on.

ANGLE - CONAN

heaves himself, dripping, from the water; his hand clamps around the ankle of the nearest GUARD, and with a yank, he throws the Kushite into the water. The SECOND GUARD comes around, startled, but too slowly: Conan's knife takes him under the ribs. The Cimmerian pushes the dead guard off his knife, then turns to the winch which works the archway's iron gate.

ANGLE - GATE

ratchets upward, creaking, as—

ANGLE - CONAN

turns the winch, shoulders working as he heaves the two-man crank around and around. He has the gate almost open when the temple door behind him bursts open, Zula and her warriors rushing through, shouting with rage.

Conan jams a spear into the winch to prevent the gate from lowering, turns toward his attackers. He grasps the head of a assegai thrust at him by the FOREMOST WARRIOR, stabbing the man with his sword and hurling him into the water. He fends off several more warriors. In moments, two or three more lie wounded or dead at his feet, the dock awash with their blood.

ANGLE - BOAT DOCK

Zula directs the attack from the open archway. She takes no notice as Yara and his son position themselves behind her.

YARA

Take care—the Eye—!

ZULA

(to warriors)

Don't let him reach the
boats—

She tears a assegai from the hand of a nearby warrior and hurls it at Conan. He dodges with a twisting of his body; it strikes the water.

ANGLE - CONAN

jabbing at the warriors who press in upon him. Bombaata whirls his two swords in almost a ritual dance, slashing, cutting—but

Conan parries easily, finally gets a boot against the short Kushite's chest and shoves him backward into Gomani. Conan turns on three others who charge in swinging sharp-edged clubs. One warrior falls, his stomach blotching red. Conan glances up—

CONAN'S POV - ZULA

—to see Zula framed in the archway above, Imbalayo beside her raising a serrated-edged BOOMERANG, about to throw.

ANGLE - CONAN

guts the Kushite nearest him, grabs the man's assegai. The dead body momentarily blocks the other warriors, giving Conan a clear shot at the Kushite beside Zula. Without missing a beat, Conan sends his assegai flying with tremendous force—

ANGLE - ZULA

instinctively shoves Imbalayo out of the way of the deadly assegai— which buries itself in the breast of an astonished YARA a couple of yards behind her. The wizard looks down in disbelief at the crimson stain blossoming on his robe, then tumbles forward like a sack of grain. Young Yara looks down at him, then towards Conan. The moment is still, eerie. Time evaporates.

ANGLE - CONAN

frozen in surprise, at what his action has wrought. The air seems to echo with the sound of a distant sword-stroke. Conan looks up, but his eyes are looking backward in time to a moment of horror in the life of the boy he himself was once.

ANGLE - YOUNG YARA

His eyes bore into Conan's. Filled with the hatred of a hundred eons, the fires of uncounted bells.

ANGLE - ZULA

grim, fierce, over the wizard's corpse. Seeing he is dead, she draws the assegai from his chest and leaps forward to the fray, a savage black she-panther, eyes ablaze with fury. She howls. Time starts up again.

ANGLE - CONAN

grabs the Kushite lunging at him. He lifts the man overhead and hurls him at his attackers. Bombaata, just struggling up, goes down again. The warriors fall back, blocking each other— and Zula.

ANGLE - THE BOATS

Conan severs the rope which holds one of the high-prowed boats,

leaps into it. Grabbing an oar and keeping low as he can, he rows like mad toward the open iron gate. Gomani, assegai in hand, leaps SCREAMING into the boat as it moves from the dock. Conan elbows him painfully into the water and goes on rowing, looking back over his shoulder.

CONAN'S POV - BOAT DOCK

Already some distance behind him, some of the warriors hurl assegais from the water's edge. Bombaata, reeling, and Imbalayo are manning the boats. Zula, brandishing her assegai and SHOUTING, urges them on.

ZULA

After him, damn your
black eyes! After him!

ANGLE - CONAN

His boat is almost at the gate. Rowing like hell, keeping low. A spear strikes the water, another lodges in the boat itself. A few seconds more...

ANGLE - ZULA

sees the assegai jamming the winch. Snarling, she crushes it with a kick of her bare foot. The winch rapidly unwinds--

ANGLE - CONAN

barely makes it through the gate before the iron bars come crashing down.

ANGLE - BOAT DOCK

Zula prepares to board the first of the two boats manned by Imbalayo, Bombaata, and her warriors. Five warriors in each boat, with Zula making six in the lead boat; a total of eleven warriors. Bombaata braces himself to help a dripping Gomani up over the side. YOUNG YARA, crouching half in shock over his father's corpse, sees Zula about to leave and rushes to water's edge; he means to clamber aboard, but Zula blocks him.

ZULA

No, child. You remain
here.

YOUNG YARA

But he killed my father--
and he stole the Eye!

ZULA

And he shall die for it,
in a thousand nameless
ways. But your place is
here, in the Temple of
Ibis.

(indicates
dead Yara)

...now, more even than
before. Amboola...

At her gesture, a tall, greying warrior, AMBOOLA, places his hands on the boy's sob-wracked shoulders. Young Yara tries to wriggle free, but Amboola holds him firmly. Zula nods, and her boat starts for the gate, Bombaata and Gomani with others at the oars, as warriors on the dock man the winch, straining. The gate slowly rises as the boats make for it. Zula looks back...

ZULA'S POV - THE BOAT DOCK

corpses, upon the steps at water's edge.

ANGLE - ZULA

looks ahead as her boat passes through the now-open gate. A grim, deadly determination shines in her dark eyes.

ANGLE - YOUNG YARA

He glances up at Amboola, and suddenly kicks back into the man's shin. Amboola gasps, releasing him, and Yara darts away as we

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LAKE - DAY

Conan rowing furiously, eager to put distance between himself and Zula's warriors. He glances downward at the water.

CONAN'S POV - LAKE

Beneath its surface, the tentacular THING paces Conan's boat. slithering shadow in the murky blackness. A ropey TENTACLE gropes toward the oarlock.

ANGLE - CONAN

jams at it with an oar, and rows all the harder, muscles rippling.

EXT. LAKE SHORE - DAY

Atali watches tensely, near the water, as stoic Strabo holds the three horses, stroking them to calm them. Atali strains to see something in the distance, amid SPLASHING SOUNDS.

ANGLE - ATALI'S POV

Seen through the mist-- Conan, paddling like mad, almost comically.

ANGLE - SHORE

Conan leaps onto shore as the boat beaches. They speak in HOARSE WHISPERS because of the nearby stables and Kushites.

ATALI

You have it?

CONAN

Why do you think they're
after me?

He indicates the lake. Through the mist the prow of Zula's boat appears. Her warriors are SHOUTING excitedly, brandishing their weapons. At a CRY O.S., Conan and Atali turn toward the stables.

CONAN'S POV - STABLES

Frenzied activity, with several BLACK WARRIORS pouring from quarters near the stables. A couple are already preparing horses.

ANGLE - LAKE SHORE

Conan hands Atali the treasure box, lifts her onto her mount: No time for Strabo's formal nonsense this time. The Eunuch, heaving his bulk onto his own stallion, hefts a spear from his saddle-sheath as a SCREAMING WARRIOR, dagger in hand, races toward them from the stable area. The spear impales the black with deadly accuracy. Conan is impressed. He, Atali, and Strabo gallop off in the opposite direction from the stables.

LONG SHOT - THE SHORE

Moments later, Zula's boat lands, the other hard behind it. From a distance, half dimmed by mist, Zula can be seen gesturing imperiously as she speaks to the warriors who greet her. She's organizing a hunt, Imbalayo at her side. The first of a number of hastily-saddled horses is brought, as the scene recedes into mist and distance...

CUT TO:

EXT. LOWLANDS - DUSK

Conan, Atali, and Strabo ride flat-out, the sun a copper shield behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLASTED HEATH - NIGHT

The trio ride at a very slow pace now, on weary horses beneath a half moon, amid gnarled trees and a barren landscape out of a baroque nightmare. Ahead rise craggy hills, barren as the mountains of the moon.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERFALL POOL - NIGHT

CLOSE on a knife whose blade is being heated over a small but steady campfire flame. Strabo's hand lifts the knife from the fire, passing it carefully to Atali. Conan squats near Atali, his back to her.

At the edge of the barren land, they have found a temporary refuge: beside a waterfall which flows from a ridge twenty or more feet high. Beneath the fall a small pool glimmers in the half moon.

ATALI
This will hurt.

She examines Conan's broad, bronzed back, where several leech-heads protrude from the skin, broken off. Her fingers touch his back lightly, reluctantly, yet both respond in restrained fashion to the contact. The girl seems especially embarrassed.

CONAN
Damned leeches.

With some revulsion, she begins delicately but skillfully to cut the leech-heads from Conan's back. His face is grim, but he makes no sound, betrays no pain. Strabo watches, standing in stoic silence nearby.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Atali finishes her work. She seems slightly more used to touching

Conan's naked back now; in a sense this act of kindness has established an unspoken bond between them. She puts down the knife. Her cool believer's mask has slipped, revealing a shy, uncertain girl.

ATALI
That's the last.

Conan turns slowly, looking into her eyes. There is gratitude there... and more.

CONAN
Whoever taught you,
possessed great skill...
with a knife.

She returns Conan's knife to him; he sheathes it. All the while, they look into each other's eyes, beneath Strabo's gaze. At last, Conan breaks the spell, glancing sharply about as SOMETHING HOWLS O.S. out in the barren lands.

ATALI
This land was cursed by
gods, long ago. The
black ones may be afraid
to pursue us this way.

CONAN
Who can say what men will
do, for revenge?

ATALI
Do you fear the gods,
Conan?

CONAN
I would not tread on
their shadow.
(beat)
- Nor do I like slaying ————
wizards, even by chance.
It's said their ghosts
have a long reach.

ATALI
It's not Yara's ghost you
need worry about.

CONAN
Yara. You knew him,
then?
(She shakes
her head)
Then who told you about—

ATALI
(stiffly, awkwardly)
You swore to help me win
the treasure. I did not
swear to answer your
questions.

But she's lost some of her former certainty, and, flustered, turns to the pool to wash her hands.

CONAN
About that treasure... I
want my share.

Her reaction is repressed, but noticeable: she is slightly stung, hurt. A harder mask coming down across her features again, she gestures to Strabo, who brings the small treasure box and hands it to her. Conan looks from her to the box.

CLOSE - TREASURE BOX

Of a strange black metal inlaid with white diamond chips, making an odd, almost familiar pattern, it is sealed with a lock in the shape of the bird-god Ibis.

ANGLE - CONAN

watches as Atali tries to pry it open with her own puny blade, fumbling--again, flustered, aware of him watching.

CONAN
Let me.

Half reluctantly, she lets him take it. Strabo observes closely, eyes narrowed, hand on swordhilt. Conan starts to apply his own knife to the lock, then stops, cocking his head slightly.

CONAN
Thought I heard...

ATALI
Are you afraid of the
wind... barbarian?

Coolly, he goes back to his work; the lock swiftly yields. The top springs back—

CLOSE - OPEN TREASURE BOX

—to reveal inside, upon velvet, an EYE-SHAPED GEM roughly the size of an egg. It catches the moonlight almost blindingly.

ANGLE - CONAN AND ATALI

She lifts the Eye respectfully, almost worshipfully, from the box.

Strabo blinks at it impassively. Conan makes no attempt to hide his unhappiness at this turn of events.

ATALI
The Eye of Ibis!

CUT TO:

EXT. RIDGE CREST - NIGHT

CLOSE on a sizable BOULDER, nearly the height of a man. The waterfall stream can be heard in BKGD. A gnarled but sturdy tree limb is being used, with leverage and considerable difficulty, to make the boulder slowly rock forward and back. Near it is a SANDALED FOOT, but no way of telling to whom it belongs. INTERCUT with the next scene:

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Conan annoyed, near Atali, as Strabo looms nearby, hand on swordhilt warily.

CONAN
Is that all? How do we
cut up such a gem--
without destroying it?

ATALI
(appalled)
It would be a sacrilege
to damage the Eye of
Ibis.

CONAN
But not to steal it, eh?
Then how did you mean to
pay me?

ATALI
(flaring)
Isn't your life payment
enough?

CONAN
It's not what we agreed
on.

ATALI
There are more important
things than wealth to--

Suddenly Conan springs toward Atali-- and instantly, Strabo draws

his sword to defend her. But Conan's body hurtles into Atali's, and both roll heavily away—

—as the BOULDER, falling from the ridge above, CRASHES LIKE THUNDER into the very spot where they had been a moment before. It rumbles massively onto the fire, plunging the scene into darkness.

ANGLE - CONAN

more or less on top of Atali, his dark eyes scanning the ridge above. Atali, stunned and breathless, finds herself face to face with the Cimmerian, inches apart. She still clutches the Eye. Strabo, sword in hand, gestures grimly toward the top of the ridge. Conan rises, nodding.

CONAN

Guard her.

Strabo helps Atali to her feet and takes up a defensive posture. She is stunned, confused. Conan swiftly climbs the ridge near the waterfall. A Cimmerian born, he is an able and quick climber, scaling it in seconds, unhampered even by the dark.

ANGLE - ATALI

troubled, watches Conan disappear over the top of the ridge. Then she exchanges a glance with Strabo, still on guard against further attack, and moves to the pool, in which the half-moon is reflected. From her purse she takes a small pinch of the same GLITTERING WHITE POWDER as before, and sprinkles it onto the surface.

ANGLE - POOL

Her reflection, and the moon's, slowly FADE as, on the now-glittering water, the IMAGE OF KARANTHES appears.

ATALI (OS)

Father... — —

KARANTHES

Atali... my dearest,
dearest daughter...

CUT TO:

EXT. ATOP RIDGE - NIGHT

Thick with trees and gnarled stumps, yet no leaf or vine grows upon them in this blighted land. Strewn twigs and branches CRUNCE underfoot as Conan's mighty legs carry him swiftly forward.

INTERCUT

with CLOSE SHOTS of the legs and feet of the PURSUED, unidentifiable as to size and identity, but moving quickly, agilely, desperately.

EXT. RIDGE CLEARING - NIGHT

Conan abruptly halts in a leafless glade, not far from the ridge crest, beneath the moon. He has a clearer view now, but sees and hears-- nothing. Only a thick, twisted log sprawls in the glade. As if listening warily for a distant sound, he half crouches, half leans upon the log, near a KNOTHOLE large enough for a small hand to pass through.

CLOSE - KNOTHOLE

as a jagged-edged KNIFE stabs upward through the hole, nearly slicing Conan's thigh. Conan dodges back easily, obviously prepared for this. He knew his quarry had to be inside the log.

ANGLE - LOG

Conan scrambles NOISILY down to one end of the log, then leaps silently back to the other end--

ANGLE - OPEN END OF LOG

--just as YOUNG YARA scurries out, knife still in hand. Conan grabs the boy's wrist in an iron vise, as Yara (no need to differentiate from here on) struggles viciously. The boy manages to throw the knife; it darts from his hand--almost like a thing alive--turns in mid-air at a ninety degree angle, and plunges toward Conan from above--

The Cimmerian ducks, startled, and the blade plunges past to thrum vibrating into the log. Conan grunts and grabs the boy more firmly by the upper arms, avoiding the sandaled kicks at his belly and groin.

YARA

Let me go! If I had more magic--

CONAN

You're the boy I saw with that old wizard.

YARA

(struggling)

He was my father! And you killed him!

CONAN

Your father.
 (shakes him,
 suddenly intense)
Those others...the
Kushite warriors... are
they with you? Is she
with you?

Conan releases Yara. The pair face each other, poised for motion, beneath the moon. Yara's knife protrudes from the log nearby.

YARA

Zula commanded me to stay
at the temple...
 (proudly)
...but I got away and
found you before she did.

CONAN

Because you're not afraid
of ghosts.

YARA

I am Yara, son of Yara.
I fear nothing.
 (fiercely)
What have you done with
it? What have you done
with the Eye?

Suddenly he lunges for the knife. Conan, reaching it first, stamps his foot down firmly over it. Yara pounds, kicks at his leg— then BITES it savagely. Conan cries out involuntarily, again grabs the boy up by the scruff of the neck.

CONAN

By Crom, there are men
who'd kill even a child
---for less..

YARA

 (defiant, spitting)
Go on. Kill me, then!
For as long as I live,
I'll hunt you— till I've
plunged my father's knife
into your stinking heart!

Conan retrieves Yara's knife, sticks it into his own belt.

CONAN

You're too little to be
playing with knives.

Tearing free, Yara grabs up a gnarled branch, swings it viciously like a club. The Cimmerian fends it off with a scratched forearm, knocks it from the boy's hand. Yara turns, flees. Conan pursues him a few steps and catches him, as a HORSE NEIGHS nearby.

ANGLE - CONAN

picks up Yara, still writhing and scratching and biting. With some difficulty he carries the boy around a great boulder to where a proud, regal BLACK STALLION SNORTS impatiently, hastily tethered to a twisted trunk. Conan deposits Yara firmly on the horse's back. Yara glares at him.

CONAN

I didn't mean to kill
your father, boy. But I
understand all about
wanting vengeance.

(heaves a sigh, as
he shoves Yara's
knife into a saddle
sheath)

Come see me when you're
grown, and we'll fight if
we must. But for now...

A mighty SLAP on the horse's rump--a Cimmerian SHOUT--and the stallion takes off like a shot. Yara clings helplessly to its mane, unable to control it. In seconds, both horse and rider are lost in distance and darkness, as Conan looks sadly after, thinking of his own father's death long ago.

CONAN

I know all about revenge.

With a sigh and a shrug of great shoulders, he turns and strides back toward the waterfall.

EXT. RIDGE CREST - NIGHT

Conan reaches the edge, above the camp, with silent footfalls. He hears VOICES BELOW, O.S. Suspicious, he squats there, out of sight, looking down.

ANGLE - CONAN'S POV

Strabo looming over her, alternately looking into the pool and about them, Atali kneels worshipfully before the pool, in which a VAGUE GLEAM can be seen from this distance. The VOICES drift up, muffled.

ATALI
...I understand what to
do. But must he die? Is
there no other way?

ANGLE - CONAN

attentive, alert. He squints, trying for a better view of the
glittering pool. He registers surprise as an unknown voice
answers Atali.

KARANTHES (OS)
There is none, my
daughter...

EXT. POOL - ATALI

Her eyes are sad. She holds the Eye of Ibis outstretched before
her.

KARANTHES (OS)
You must continue to
tread the path you have
begun.

ATALI
But surely...if he's done
what we freed him to
do...

EXT. RIDGE CREST - CONAN

keeping low. Watching. Cold.

KARANTHES (OS)
Some weapons are fit only
for one task. When that
task is done, best to
--- destroy them... ---

EXT. POOL - ATALI

KARANTHES (OS)
(continued)
...lest at some future
day they be raised
against you.

ATALI
(bows her head)
Your will be my will,
father.

CONAN (OS)
(calling)
Ho, down there!

Atali reacts, as CAMERA PULLS BACK. Strabo steps between her and the ridge, where Conan now appears as if he'd just arrived. Atali disturbs the pool waters swiftly, anxiously, with her hand, and Karanthes' image (and the glow) quickly FADE. She turns toward Conan, rising, trying to sound calm, collected.

ATALI
Praise Dagoth for
returning you unharmed.
What did you find?

Conan slides easily down the ridge slope, keeping his feet. He's silent.

ANGLE - CONAN

crosses to Atali, past the wary Strabo, whose eyes follow him. For a moment Conan looks at her. She almost breaks eye-contact.

CONAN
It was just a boy,
playing with rocks. I
spanked him and sent him
home..

Atali frowns skeptically; Conan ignores this, strolling to the pool, whose surface still ripples. Studies his reflection thoughtfully. Atali stirs herself, as if shaking off sleep. She strides to her horse.

ATALI
We must go.

Strabo helps her mount. She places the Eye of Ibis in its box, into a bag hung on her saddle.

CONAN
Go? Go where?

ATALI
A place not many days'
ride from here. The
Kazankian Forest.

CONAN
(furrows brow)
Even in Shadizar men
spoke of that forest.
They say no man ever came
out of it alive.

ATALI
(coldly)
I am not a man... as you
have repeatedly observed.

Atali switches tactics. She looks down at him, her eyes and voice earnest, almost pleading.

ATALI
Come with us, barbarian.
We need your strength.

CONAN
(laughs harshly)
Why shouldn't I just take
the jewel you've got?

Strabo makes a subtle shift to a battle stance, his sword ready.
Conan does not miss it. Atali breaks in quickly.

ATALI
Please believe me, Conan.
I thought there'd be more
treasure. I didn't
know...

(switches
thoughts)
But there is a treasure,
a real one, in the
Forest... which only the
Eye can help us gain.

CONAN
I've heard this before.

ATALI
You cannot know how
important this is.
You'll be amply rewarded,
I promise you.

She and Strabo react in surprise as Conan suddenly swings up onto
his own horse, ready to ride.

ATALI
Then you'll ride with us?

CONAN
I've little choice.

He gestures in the direction they've come, across the barren land.

EXT. HORIZON - BARREN LAND - NIGHT - CONAN'S POV

Even in the darkness, beneath the half moon, a CLOUD OF DUST can be seen, gleaming, swirling.

EXT. POOLSIDE - NIGHT

Atali looks fearfully at Conan.

CONAN
Yara's warriors must not
be as fearful of the gods
as you thought.

Strabo hurriedly sheathes his sword and mounts. The three of them gallop off.

EXT. BARREN LAND - NIGHT

Like furies they ride amid the nightmare landscape, alongside the river which makes no things grow... the same stream which flowed into the waterfall.

MONTAGE - TRAVELING SHOTS - NIGHT

Gradually the river widens, and vegetation grows on its banks as the Barren Land is left behind. The undergrowth slows their horses, but they press on as swiftly as they can. Atali and Strabo look continuously over their shoulders, but not Conan; he is concerned only with what lies ahead.

More and more trees spring up, till at last the trio are riding through a virtual RAIN FOREST.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - PRE-DAWN

Barely able to make any progress now as the trees and underbrush grow almost impossibly thick, the three grim riders crest a ridge overlooking the now-surgings river. White water rapids, calmer water ahead. Beyond this ridge, the rain forest appears impenetrable, a mass of green shadows and alien sounds stirring in the pre-dawn light.

ANGLE - CONAN

pulls up his horse, leaps off, near a single great tree; its roots mostly exposed, it juts out over the river. Atali and Strabo, puzzled and desperate, rein up.

ATALI

Why are you stopping?
They can't be more than
an hour's ride behind us.

She gestures back the way they've come—

ANGLE - ATALI'S POV - THE BARREN LANDS

Beyond the trees of the rain forest, the Barren Land lies like scorched earth. There, amid the first faint traces of DAWN, the slight CLOUD OF DUST betrays the approach of Zula's riders— nearer than before.

ANGLE - CONAN

turns in the other direction, as do Atali and Strabo.

ANGLE - CONAN'S POV

Before and below them, the ground levels off again... the beginning of a vast RAIN FOREST. The river winds into it and soon is lost to view. The effect is ominous, foreboding.

ANGLE - CONAN

CONAN

The horses can't go any
further.

As Atali and Strabo exchange uneasy looks about what to do, Conna tests his strength against the great rotted tree overhanging the river. It creaks... and moves... slightly. He GRUNTS, and begins to apply real muscle to the task of shoving it over the ridge and into the river.

CONAN

Come on, fat one— give
me a hand here! I can't
do everything! . . .

Strabo dismounts, helps Atali down. Conan has braced mighty hands and shoulders against the bole of the tree, rocking it back and forth. Loose dirt and rocks fall from where the dead roots are half exposed, into the surging river below. Panting, huffing, sweating, Strabo adds his own weight and strength to Conan's at the last moment—

ANGLE - TREE -

—and it topples down the slope and into the river with a
THUNDEROUS ROAR.

ANGLE - CONAN

Chest heaving, looking down at the river. Atali fumes.

ATALI

What use is that? All
you've done is waste
precious time, while--

In one swift and fluid motion, Conan turns and scoops Atali into his arms, then turns back-- and leaps with her into the river below. She SCREAMS in terror.

EXT. RAIN FOREST RIVER - PRE-DAWN

They hit the river only a few feet behind the great tree. The raging current, ROARING ON SOUND, is tearing it loose from the shore. Grasping the sputtering Atali with one arm, Conan grabs a thick jutting branch and hangs on.

EXT. RIDGE - PRE-DAWN

Strabo gapes unbelieving after them for a moment, glances back toward the distant riders, then takes a deep breath--holds his nose-- and leaps in after them.

EXT. RAIN FOREST RIVER - PRE-DAWN

The fallen tree tugs clear of the shore, as Strabo too grabs a thick branch. He and Conan hang on, the Cimmerian holding Atali, who likewise clings desperately to his neck. Swirling out, past the rapids, the tree picks up speed in the strong current.

MONTAGE - THE RIVER

The river bears onward both tree and human passengers, ROARING, into the reaches of the verdant, life-teeming rain forest. The trio GASP for breath, as they are lashed by the water's spume.

ANGLE - THE TREE

With a scream, Atali slips her grip as the tree plunges between two slick river-boulders. Conan ducks underwater, swings around to the far side of the tree, grabbing her before she can be yanked away by the current. He lifts her across a gnarly branch, water gushing from her mouth as she chokes, regains her breath, peers blearily at him, gratefully. Suddenly she stiffens, horrified-- the Eye of Ibis!

Conan grins--and lifts a hand from the water, revealing the treasure box safely in his grasp.

MONTAGE - THE RIVER

On the horizon behind them, a fiery sun rises, bathing river and rain forest alike in its lurid crimson glow.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST RIVER - MORNING

The river is quieter now, less violent, though still it surges onward with a high-irresistible power. The three are borne along amid the SOUNDS of the rain forest: the SCREECH of birds, the CHATTERING of monkeys, the WHIRRING of insects. The trees are so thick on the river shore that the sun is virtually blotted out. Dark shadows dapple the figures who cling to the enormous floating tree-trunk.

Atali half lies, half clings atop the tree, holding to a branch there. Conan and Strabo have remained in the water, guiding the tree as best they can. Strabo is pale, obviously sea-sick. Only Conan seems fully alert to their surroundings.

ANGLE - CONAN

grimly quiet, watchful. Atali, above but near him and Strabo, brushes aside hair made stringy by the water; the imperious virgin in a mess, her face caked with mud. Yet there is an inner strength there, too, beneath the once-pristine facade... her faith in her god and in her mission. And perhaps something more.

ATALI

Can't we steer this log
to shore?

CONAN

The river path is

~~faster... as long as we~~
can stay on it.

(gazes about)

At least you reached your
Kezankian Forest.

ATALI

But the river won't take
us where we must go.
That way lies overland,
and--

Suddenly she winces, gaping wide-eyed, as Conan's hand whips upward from the water, knife glittering in a sliver of sunlight-- to decapitate a huge PYTEON about to drop onto her from an overhead branch. Atali is splattered with its blood, repulsed.

The snake's head sinks at once; its headless carcass dangles limply from the branch as they float by. Atali gazes at it in silent horror. Strabo gives a wretched belch.

ANGLE - LOG

floating downriver, as the sun-- as judged by the occasional errant ray-- rises higher in the unseen sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST RIVER - DAY

The log drifts on. Somewhere a wild bird SCREECHES. Atali slaps an insect on her cheek. She and Strabo seem far more exhausted than Conan, who keeps alert despite his fatigue. Strabo isn't well at all.

ANGLE - CONAN

abruptly pulls Atali from her perch. She splashes into the now-tepid water, comes up wet and sputtering and disoriented. Conan swims with her toward the shore, Strabo following his lead, flailing and going under several times. The Cimmerian hurries.

ATALI

(coughing)

Where are we going? I
thought you said we were
safe--

CONAN

Use your eyes, girl!

Atali glances back over Conan's bronzed back as he bears her shoreward with mighty strokes.

ANGLE - FAR SHORE - ATALI'S POV

Several CROCODILES splash languidly into the water, swimming out from the bank.

ANGLE - CONAN

reaches the shore, yanks Atali roughly onto land, then helps the half-drowned Strabo scramble ashore. About them at river's edge, the rain forest is an emerald mask hiding untold dooms.

CONAN

Well, this was as good a
place as any to get off.

Underbrush blocks their way inland. Drawing his sword, Conan hacks away at it. Strabo does the same, glancing back at the river and belching. Atali too casts a wary glance behind, as if expecting the crocodiles to follow them onto shore. They plunge inland.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST INTERIOR - MONTAGE

Conan and Strabo cut their way through the forest. Atali follows as closely as she can, watching for more serpents. NIGHT follows DAY: They work their way inland, make overnight camp in a clearing about a fire, sleep in squatting positions amid JUNGLE SOUNDS. Then DAY again, and more trekking, cutting, sweating. Atali's white robes are little more than tatters now, and Strabo often helps her walk; but she holds fast to the box containing the Eye of Ibis. The rain forest seems limitless.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - DAY

Conan hacks at a thick vine which blocks their path. Strabo and Atali behind him, the Eunuch helping the weary girl. Conan halts in mid-stroke, peering ahead through narrowed eyes. The others, noticing, move closer to stare past him.

EXT. RAIN FOREST GLADE - DAY - CONAN'S POV

A glade, devoid of heavy vegetation. On a slight rise, amid shadows broken only intermittently by sunlight, THREE FIGURES IN DARK ROBES sit on the ground, their faces hidden by cowls. They are unmoving, silent, sinister.

ANGLE - CONAN

silences Atali with a gesture as she starts to speak. He moves forward, sword ready, quiet as a great cat stalking.

WIDER ANGLE - GLADE

Leaving Strabo to guard Atali, Conan moves with slow, deliberate steps toward the three squatting figures. He studies them as he draws near, but their features remain hidden beneath their cowls. He stops only a few feet from them. They still do not move.

ANGLE - CONAN

raises his sword and pushes gently with it at the MIDDLE FIGURE. It slowly tilts back, taking the other two with it, the cowls

falling back to reveal THREE HUMAN HEADS on a set of interconnected WOODEN STAKES. The flesh on the severed heads is withered, grey, leathery; their eye sockets stare emptily, their gumless mouths gape. As they tilt back, a hidden CROSSBOW-LIKE DEVICE beneath the cowls is activated, and an ARROW shoots straight upward with terrific force—

ANGLE - CONAN'S POV

—into the little patch of OPEN SKY above. The arrowhead is designed to catch the air, and makes a LONG, EERILY WAILING SOUND, like that of a soul in torment. Or like a primitive alarm. The arrow vanishes into foliage as it peaks, arcs, and falls, the SOUND slowly fading after it, silencing the other noises of the rain forest.

ANGLE - CONAN

joined by fearful Atali, grim Strabo.

ATALI

What was that?

CONAN

Whoever lives around here, they don't like visitors any more than Luda did.

ATALI

Are they trying to frighten us away?

CONAN

No.

(looks around)

They just want to know where we are.

Conan in the lead, the trio plunge into the thick trees and underbrush. Atali casts a worried glance back at the skull.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - DAY

Not pausing now to cut away the foliage, Conan, Atali, and Strabo—who acts as rear guard—race as swiftly as they can through the forest. The jungle is alive again with SOUND. Small beasts—even a leopard—scatter from their path.

ANGLE - ATALI

stumbles on a root, falls painfully. Her arm is scratched, bleeding. Strabo helps her up, but she's exhausted. Conan grabs her other arm.

CONAN

Do you want to die on
your knees?

ATALI

How can you be sure they
even care about us?

Almost before she can finish, a SECOND WAILING ARROW rises from
somewhere nearby. They look up—

THEIR POV - THE HIGH TREES

Something flutters above the roof of green, the SOUND FADING—

ANGLE - CONAN, ATALI, STRABO

Strabo grabs her up into his arms, though he continues to hold
his sword, and lumbers after Conan as the Cimmerian races through
the brush.

CONAN & CREW - TRAVELING

through the rain forest, moving as fast as possible. Another
WAILING ARROW, then another, SOUNDS above and about them, but no
longer do they stop. Strabo cannot match Conan's stride carrying
Atali, so Conan must move more slowly than he wants. He keeps
exhorting Strabo to greater speed.

EXT. RAIN FOREST PATH - DAY

Conan hurries along what seems the faint remnant, almost, of a
path. Suddenly, ten yards or so ahead, TWO KEZANKI SAVAGES rise
from the underbrush. They are dusky-skinned, fierce-looking,
painted with crimson and white clay paint, like New Zealand
Maoris. The one nearer Conan raises a spear, while the other has
a special, heavy bow and is about to loose a WAILING ARROW
upward.

ANGLE - CONAN

charges ahead with a mighty CIMMERIAN WAR CRY, which startles the
Kezanki. Still yards away, he makes a headlong leap toward them.
The nearer one looses his spear wildly which barely misses Conan
as the barbarian hits him like an airborne missile.

ANGLE - THE PATH

The first savage is smashed bone-breakingly into the one behind,
whose WAILING ARROW is released at a reduced arc. Still its
eerie WAIL splits the air briefly. Conan stabs one savage
through the heart. The other tries to jab him with a long
machete-like knife before Conan can pull his sword free. Conan

strangles him with one hand, then looks skyward as the WAILING trails off.

CONAN

Damn.

Suddenly Conan whirls at the faintest NOISE behind him... the snapping of a twig. A THIRD SAVAGE springs at him from concealment, about to plunge a bone knife into the Cimmerian's unprotected back--only to fall HEADLESS to the sword.

Startled, Conan looks up-- Strabo! The fat Eunuch holds a bloody sword, which he now cleans with a large leaf. Behind Strabo, Atali sways, breathless. Conan gives the Eunuch a nod, as he pulls his own sword free from a corpse.

CONAN

My wine merchant will
thank you for that-- if
we ever get back to
Shadizar.

ATALI

(half mad
with fear)

There's no escape. We
must be surrounded.

CONAN

(eyes darting)

None of the wailing
arrows came from that
way.

(points ahead
and slightly
to right)

Perhaps there's a reason.

He grabs her hand, races ahead. Strabo follows, pausing a moment to spit upon the headless corpse.

CONAN & CREW - TRAVELING

Still another WAILING ARROW off to one side, but closer now. The Kezanki are closing in.

EXT. RAIN FOREST - DAY

Conan, running ahead of the others, glances back.

CONAN'S POV - SAVAGES

Beyond and behind Strabo and Atali, several knife- and bow-wielding SAVAGES can be seen openly now, loping low to the ground

like human wolves, all nearly naked. Every few seconds, another savage or two will join the chase, till there are more than a dozen in pursuit. Meanwhile, a ululating HOWL rises from their throats, a hungry human sound eerily similar to the wailing arrows.

ANGLE - CONAN

lets Atali and Strabo run past him. He brings up the rear, keeping his eye on their pursuers.

EXT. CRYPT CLEARING - DAY

In foreground, Atali and Strabo stand, gaping wide-eyed at something O.S. as Conan, glancing over his shoulder, trots from the rain forest's edge. He nearly runs into them before he stops short, puzzled. Stares past them-- his own mouth dropping open-- his eyes rising slowly--

CONAN'S POV - EYES RISING - THE CLEARING

The clearing is actually a small treeless hill, perhaps seventy-five feet in diameter. Only sparse clumps of grass grow here, and even these diminish as Conan's eyes trace the incline of the hill upward, till there is no vegetation at all around--

THE CRYPT, squatting malevolently on the summit. Made of huge green stone blocks, obviously carved by some ancient civilized race, not by primitive Kezanki. It seems sinister, magical, out of place in the forest primeval... like the top half of a great emerald spheroid jutting from a ruptured earth.

An OUTER DOOR, several feet wide, is visible-- and it's open.

ANGLE - CONAN

glances back at the forest. The Kezanki have stopped at the forest's edge, clearly terrified. They shake their heads, moan like frustrated hounds. One YOUNGER SAVAGE brings up his spear to throw--but an OLDER SAVAGE clubs him, curses him in an unintelligible tongue. Other Kezanki pick the unconscious youth up and drag him off. The older savage remains, staring with hatred and fear at the intruders.

CONAN

Whatever it is, the
Kezanki are afraid to
come near it.

(glancing at
Crypt)

I don't blame them.

ATALI
(breathless)
The Crypt of Shadows!

Atali starts toward the Crypt, as if in a trance. Strabo waddles after her, Conan taking up the rear, keeping a watchful eye on the remaining Rezanki. The OLDER SAVAGE spits at them, turns away. The rest follow him in retreat. They whisper fearfully to each other, making strange signs.

ANGLE - CONAN

and the others are nearly to the Crypt's doorway now.

ATALI
The doorway is open.

CONAN
So is the lair of a cave
bear.

He pauses, suspicious, still crouching low in case of an attack by the Rezanki. Hefts a sizable rock from nearby and rolls it slowly toward the doorway and the dark, unknown beyond.

ANGLE - ROCK

rolls over some hidden spring a few feet from the entrance, activating a PITFALL. A great piece of earth just plunges away, leaving a hole as wide as the doorway and some two yards across... nearly impossible to get across.

ANGLE - CONAN

peers down over the edge of the pitfall. Only a foot or so below ground level, a score of deadly BARBED SPIKES gleam. Conan rises, glances at Atali, about to speak, when suddenly there's a LOUD ULULATING CRY from behind them. He whirls--

CONAN'S POV - YOUNG SAVAGE

long knife held high, charges at them, mad for the kill. Other Rezanki snarl at him from the clearing edge. Strabo turns, too, but is too slow...

ANGLE - CONAN

meets the hurtling savage, lifts him high over his head, and hurls him down in one fluid motion into the yawning pit. The savage SCREAMS-- once only-- as he strikes the barbed spikes. Conan is already whirling about, ready to meet more attacks, but none comes.

ATALI
(gasping at pit)
Why--?

CONAN

There's always one who
must prove how brave he
is—

(looks down)

—or how foolish. But
it's good for us.

As Atali looks puzzled, Conan steps lightly onto the dead man's back. The corpse gives beneath his weight, the points of several spikes now peeking through the dead flesh. But Conan is across, and in the "foyer" of the Crypt.

INT. CRYPT FOYER - DAY

Conan crouches in shadow, for little light reaches the Crypt from outside. He looks about him for a moment, senses no lurking danger, turns back toward Atali and Strabo.

CONAN

Hurry— before they
change their minds!

EXT. CRYPT - DAY

Atali, at Strabo's grim nod, steps gingerly onto the calf of the corpse, avoiding a spike which juts through the knee. She pales, seems faint, sickened. Strabo, one eye on the Kezanki, steadies her with his free hand. Still she can barely keep her balance on the yielding flesh.

Across the pit, Conan leans forward, reaching toward her. But it will take two or three agile steps by her across the corpse— and between the spikes which now jut up like spearheads— to reach Conan's outstretched hand. Atali is wide-eyed with terror and horror, unable to go forward.

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - DAY

The Kezanki watch intently.

EXT. THE PIT - DAY

Conan gestures impatiently with his outstretched hand—

CONAN

Hurry!

Atali braces herself with a silent prayer, eyes shut— then flings herself forward, releasing Strabo's hand.

CLOSE - ATALI'S FEET

One, two steps on rubbery flesh. The corpse settles somewhat, and another spike-point juts up, skinning her ankle. The body slides sideways on the spikes, she slips—

INT. FOYER OF CRYPT - DAY

Conan lunges out, while Atali sways crazily, off balance, about to fall, her hand outstretched in desperate supplication—

ANGLE - CONAN'S HAND - CLOSE

His iron fingers lock, just barely, with hers... work their way swiftly up to her slim wrist—

ANGLE - CONAN

yanks her into his arms. She collapses, sobbing. He looks back toward Strabo, eases Atali off to one side, then gestures to Strabo to come ahead. But it'll be even harder now.

EXT. CRYPT - DAY

Strabo, fear lurking under his stolid exterior, steps away from the pit. He glances one final time at the Kezanki behind, then turns and takes a running, heavy leap— lands on the corpse with one massive foot only, between two spike-heads, forcing the carcass further down, down—

INT. FOYER OF CRYPT - DAY

Strabo gets one foot onto the foyer, but can't quite make it. Conan grasps him by the forearm and they lock grips— but Strabo wavers, seems about to pull Conan into the deadly pit with him, for the Cimmerian has nothing to hold onto.

Atali gasps in fear, as the scales hang in the balance. Then, with a mighty effort, Conan heaves Strabo sprawling into the foyer. The Eunuch PANTS, catching his breath, Conan over him.

CONAN

Now... we are even.

Strabo looks at him expressionlessly. No gratitude there.

ANGLE - CONAN

rises, looking about, his eyes adjusting to the darkness. Atali, limping slightly from her cut foot, helps Strabo to his feet. Conan moves to the inner door of the Crypt.

ANGLE - INNER DOOR

It is massive, metallic. Carved with strange ancient runes and demonic images. Conan tests it with his hand, finds it solid. Looks back questioningly at Atali.

ATALI

Now you know why I was
told to bring the
strongest man of the age
with me.

CONAN

Who told you?

ATALI

I... cannot say.
(as Conan
turns away)
Cimmerian... Conan...
(he freezes)
Thank you... for risking
your life to save mine.

CONAN

(coldly)

You know where the
treasure is.

ATALI

Was that the only reason?

CONAN

Have you given me
another?

She reacts, hurt. But she recalls her mission... and the dire command of Xarantes. Controlling herself, she crouches before the inner door.

ATALI

There should be
handholds— here.

Indicates four CARVED DEMONIC FACES near the base of the door. Twisted mouths gap in agony, providing handholds. Conan and Strabo exchange glances.

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

crouch before the massive door, feeling for the stylized handholds. They pull upward. Nothing. Look at each other, try again— harder. Now the door gives. They strain. It rises slowly, with a GRATING SOUND like the meshing of gears. The veins on the wrists and arms and of the two warriors pulse, throb. The

strain shows in their faces, the veins of their muscled necks—but the door goes up, first slowly, then with a steady upward heave.

In moments it is fully open, the two men straining to hold it there, like twin Atlases. Atali moves quickly through between them.

INT. INNER CHAMBER - DAY

She gropes for something on the inner wall, in the darkness—

CLOSE - ATALI'S HAND

—and finds it: a RECESSED KNOB just inside the doorway.

ANGLE - ATALI

She turns the knob—hard. Inside the wall, there is a RATCHETING CLICK, and instantly the terrible pressure on Conan and Strabo is gone. Some hidden mechanism now holds the door in place. Both men step quickly into the chamber and away from beneath the door, breathing deeply. Conan looks at the knob as Atali, kneeling, uses a flint from her purse to light a piece of rotted TAPESTRY which lay on the floor.

CONAN

For one who's never been
here before, you know
this place well.

His voice echoes slightly.

ATALI

I was told what to look
for.

Holding the burning strip of tapestry before her, she moves to the opposite end of the Crypt chamber. The darkness seems to close in around the light. Conan looks back toward the doorway.

CONAN

They don't get much light
in here.

INT. INNER CHAMBER

Day or night seems almost irrelevant in this windowless chamber. It seems far larger inside than it did from without. The walls, as far as can be seen, are covered with bas-relief images and age-tattered, rotted, brownish tapestries.

ANGLE - ATALI

steps across the center of the chamber, treading upon a yard-wide PENTACLE SYMBOL graven there. The rest of the floor is a carved MAP, circular style, of the known world of the Hyborian Age, with the Pentacle at its center-- and in the center of the pentacle: Shadizar the Wicked. No one notes that now, however. Above, the slowly burning strip of tapestry casts faint light upon various-sized GEMS which stud the black, domed ceiling, resembling a star-filled sky; it is, in fact, an astronomical/astrological chart, and the position of its stars has deep meaning, indeed.

Atali moves just ahead of Conan and Strabo, the latter behaving more like a priestly assistant than a warrior-eunuch. Conan keeps a wary eye on them both as Atali holds up the burning tapestry--

ATALI'S POV - DRAGON-HEAD

Half visible in the glow, set into the rear wall of the chamber, is a DRAGON-HEAD CARVING OF BLACK IRON, enormous, with a closed mouth big enough that, open, it could swallow several men whole. It has two EYES the size and shape of the Eye of Ibis-- and an empty space above and between them where the Eye would just fit.

CLOSE - ATALI

gingerly takes the Eye of Ibis in its box from her purse. The pattern of diamond chips on black metal across the top of the small treasure box matches the star chart on the ceiling. Atali removes the Eye from the box. It gleams in the firelight.

ANGLE - THE DRAGON-HEAD

Strabo holds the shred of tapestry, which burns slow but low. As Conan watches, Atali stretches up and places the Eye of Ibis into the empty space in the carving's "face," and steps back.

ATALI'S POV - THE EYES

After a moment, all three Eyes begin to GLOW, as if with a life of their own. One almost expects the dragon-head, flat though it be, to come to life and begin breathing fire.

ANGLE - ATALI

backs away in ritualistic fashion, bowing and whispering a soft, inaudible chant. Strabo to one side of and behind her does the same. He drops the tapestry upon the stone floor to burn itself out, as she stands at last in the center of the Pentacle.

ANGLE - CONAN

keeps an eye on both of them-- and on the door. His hand goes to his swordhilt. Slowly he draws the blade. Will this be the moment when he's outlived his usefulness to them?

ANGLE - ATALI

stretches forth her hands. The BIRTHEMARK upon her forearm stands out prominently.

CLOSE - BIRTHEMARK

Vaguely it resembles a HORNED, WINGED DRAGON, winding about her wrist.

ANGLE - ATALI

She closes her eyes, begins to recite in sotto voice. A prayer, an invocation... the words foreign, from a long-forgotten tongue.

ATALI

Im volucra, nu ouroboro
kaa-yazoth raksha tsotha-
lanti xal totun khemsa...

ANGLE - CONAN

eyes Strabo.

ANGLE - STRABO

in silent prayer, head bowed like a priest or acolyte.

ANGLE - DRAGON-HEAD

The eyes glow more brightly, even as the last of the burning tapestry dies. The rest of the chamber is dark, but the EYES STILL GLOW--

Slowly, Atali's low-voiced incantation is drowned out by a GRINDING SOUND-- as the dragon's iron mouth begins to open. The lower jaw is fixed, level with the floor, but the upper jaw rises, to reveal the blazing interior of a HUGE FURNACE, whose roaring fire floods the chamber with light.

CLOSE - THE FURNACE

And in the heart of the furnace, upon a tripod, something METALLIC gleams... darkly.

ANGLE - CONAN

stares incredulously at this new marvel. His SHADOW is cast huge upon the wall behind him, long and dark and sinister, against the bas-relief carvings. Long, rotting TAPESTRIES hang between the various carvings. The carvings, now visible in the furnace-light, show scenes of a battle between demons which, in a highly stylized and ancient way, resemble the film's PROLOGUE. CAMERA moves past Conan to show this...

ANGLE - DOORWAY

quickly and nimbly into the chamber from outside, crouching low.

ANGLE - ATALI

finishes her incantation, her arms still outstretched, birthmark flaming in the furnace-light.

ATALI

...sareerta thamos fon
yota DAGOTE!

The last word is clear, strong. Atali lowers her arm to her side, her head straight and proud... she is in a trance.

ANGLE - CONAN

trying to watch, shielding his eyes from the glare, wary for any treachery. But he's unprepared for what comes next:

CONAN'S POV - ATALI

With a shrug of lithe shoulders, Atali steps out of the tattered remnant of her gown. The bright glare of the dragon-furnace frames her nude body in light and shadow. In a ritual trance, she slowly approaches the dragon-mouth, where flames ROAR HUNGRILY.

ANGLE - CONAN

starts for Atali, to stop her, but his arm is grasped by Strabo. Their shadows leap and twist on the walls around them, flickering. The giant eunuch shakes his head, indicating Conan must not disturb his mistress now. Conan is torn— looks past Strabo and sees—

CONAN'S POV - ATALI

She steps into the ROARING FLAMES, is engulfed. Yet, miraculously, she appears unharmed, even unaffected, and approaches the tripod at its center.

ANGLE - CONAN

wide-eyed with superstitious awe:

CONAN

Crom!

CUT TO:

INT. CRYPT INNER CHAMBER - DOORWAY - CLOSE

on the HANDS of someone (YOUNG YARA, as it turns out, but not clearly here) cutting into the recessed knob with a knife, prying it loose. Something gives way inside the recess. The beginnings of a RATCHETY SOUND...

ANGLE - DOOR

notch, an inch at a time.

INT. CRYPT INNER CHAMBER

Unaware of what's happening behind them, Conan and Strabo stare at the blazing inferno, sweating from the intense heat. Their shadows seem to crouch low.

CONAN'S POV - ATALI

—as Atali takes from the tripod:

CLOSE - THE HORN

a curved and tapering GOLDEN HORN, a foot and more long, gleaming gold and encrusted with various gems.

CONAN'S POV - ATALI

She turns, still entranced, and steps out of the ROARING furnace. Behind her, the dragon-mouth's upper jaw begins slowly to close.

ANGLE - CONAN & ATALI

Atali steps toward him, dreamlike, her shadow wavering—

ATALI

Conan...

He sheathes his sword, catches her as she swoons. The Golden Horn drops from her hand; Strabo picks it up. Conan hardly notices, intent on the girl. He lifts her, strides toward the door...and starts, seeing it slowly descending. A DARK FIGURE darts away through the foyer beyond.

ANGLE - STRABO

holding the Horn, eyes gleaming. He looks from it— to Conan's exposed back. The wall-shadows curl closer, as if hungrily.

ANGLE - CONAN

His eyes were sharp, all along. He turns, dropping Atali, just in time to evade a whizzing two-handed swordstroke that would have severed his head. The Golden Horn is now in Strabo's belt. Conan

draws his sword, with a wolfish grin; he's been waiting for this.

A stroke, counterstroke, parry and thrust. Shadows arch, twist, lunge. Conan and Strabo battle in the glare of the furnace, as the chamber door slowly RATCHEETS DOWNWARD--

ANGLE - ATALI

--toward Atali, who has fallen with her head beneath the door. It's about halfway down now, descending another inch every few seconds. She lies unconscious.

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

Strabo is no indifferent swordsman. His surprisingly mighty blows slip off Conan's parrying sword to smash into the demon-carvings on the wall, and even lop off one of the teeth of the dragon-mouth. The furnace flames ROAR BRIEFLY, as if the dragon-head were truly alive and stricken. The upper jaw continues to close slowly, cutting off the light. By sheer weight, Strabo bears Conan back toward the blazing mouth, his shadow looming huge as they draw closer and closer to the flames--

CLOSE - FURNACE MOUTH

Kicked by Conan's boot as he dodges Strabo's thrust, A BURNING COAL falls from the furnace, to smolder brightly on the stone floor FOR THE DURATION OF THE FIGHT. But instead of growing dimmer, the COAL GLOWS BRIGHTER, eerily, magically. The dragon-mouth is almost completely shut now.

ANGLE - THE WARRIORS

Strabo is good, but Conan is better; in moments, he closes with the Eunuch, hurls him down. His own swordblow misses, and the two of them grapple. Strabo tries to force Conan's head into the furnace. Conan hits him, and Strabo reels, the Golden Horn falling from his belt--

ANGLE - ATALI

--to lie near Atali as she wakes, with a horrified start, to see the door only two feet above her head. Grabbing the Golden Horn, she scrambles to her knees in the foyer, staring wildly back inside to where Conan and Strabo fight.

ATALI

Conan--!

ANGLE - CONAN

gets his knee between himself and Strabo, pushes the warrior-eunuch away, across the chamber. Strabo staggers backward, grunting. His shadow jerks, bends, flickers.

ANGLE - STRABO

sees the door, nearly too low now for him to get through. With surprising speed for so large a man, he rushes toward the door and squeezes under it.

INT. FOYER

Strabo rolls to his feet. Atali crouches, staring through the narrowing opening with genuine fear and concern at Conan.

INT. INNER CHAMBER - CONAN

paces for the door, his shadow dancing across the wall. The door has notched down another inch. Conan tries to slip through, but Strabo's sword keeps him back; he'd be carved in pieces by the time he reached the other side.

He looks about, sees the knob, grabs for it—and it comes free in his hand. Slash marks on the wood show where a knife carved it loose. He throws the knob away, and turns back to the door—only a few inches from the ground now.

ANGLE - DRAGON-MOUTH

Barely a few inches open, light streaming out between the iron teeth in flickering fragments. A yard from the furnace, the spilled EMBER burns brightly, its light becoming more and more intense, ruddy, as the furnace-light shuts off.

ANGLE - DOOR

Conan braces himself, grabbing the bottom of the descending door. Strabo's sword cuts at his fingers from the other side, but because of the angle, can't do much damage. Conan strains to keep the door from closing. Muscles stand out across his back, his tunic splits—but it's no use. The door descends relentlessly, tearing from his grasp. He staggers back, breathless, raging in frustration as the door notches down, down—

The last sound he hears from the far side is Atali's echoing cry...

ATALI
(muffled)

Conan—!

Then the door RATCHETS down another notch— and SLAMS, echoing, flush to the ground.

ANGLE - CONAN

stands alone, sealed off from the outside world, with only his

flickering shadow for company. For a moment he is motionless, as the QUIET closes in. Then he looks around, like a wolf surveying his cave.

ANGLE - DRAGON FURNACE

The "mouth" shuts completely with an IRON GRINDING— till the only source of light in the gloom is the EMBER, magically still burning, which casts eerie, long SHADOWS upon the wall. Dimmer than those cast by the furnace-light, these seem somehow more threatening.

ANGLE - CONAN

Still like a wolf sniffing a cave, Conan moves from where he stood— but his SHADOW, growing even longer, seems not to move with him. Indeed, two strange LIGHTS— points of fire, really— glow where its "eyes" would be.

ANGLE - CHAMBER

Conan feels a wall, along the bas-relief images, looking for some secret passage or other clue to a way out.

CLOSE - CONAN

Suddenly, the hairs on the nape of his neck warning him, he turns—

WIDE ANGLE - CONAN

—to face HIS OWN SHADOW, long and broad and menacing, eyes aglow like coals, on the opposite wall. It seems imbued with an inhuman life all its own.

ANGLE - SHADOW

Now, before Conan's amazed eyes, "his" Shadow— holding its own dark sword, far longer than his own— PULLS ITSELF AWAY FROM THE WALL, and stalks toward him.

ANGLE - CONAN

raises his own sword, just in time to fend off the downward stroke of the Shadow-sword. The Shadow has the greater mass, and the impact sends Conan hurtling across the stone floor. It stalks toward him, sword upraised, as Conan's eyes grow wide with dread of the supernatural.

ANGLE - SHADOW AND CONAN

He leaps out of the way, as the Shadow-sword comes down so mightily that it cuts a deep notch in the floor where he had squatted an instant before. The SOUND of the blow seems to come from an infinity away, across the black void of space.

CLOSE - CONAN

Conan sprawls on the stone floor— inches from the glowing EMBER. He looks from it to the Shadow stalking him—

ANGLE - THE SHADOW

swings its sword in a cross-body arc—

ANGLE - CONAN

rolls away from the swordblow, and slashes his own sword down on the glowing EMBER, trying to extinguish it. But though he cuts it into several pieces, each piece glows as brightly as the whole: a supernatural flame. He leaps away again, barely evading another Shadow-sword blow.

ANGLE - CONAN

leaping, writhing, rolling across the floor— always barely ahead of the deadly Shadow-thing and its Shadow-sword. He raises his sword again— and the huge Shadow-sword SNAPS it in two like a piece of straw. Weaponless, he hurls the remnant of his blade at the Shadow.

ANGLE - SHADOW

The broken blade PASSES THROUGH the Shadow as if it were no more substantial than a wisp of fog—

ANGLE - TAPESTRIES

and pull loose a section before it clatters to the floor.

ANGLE - CONAN

Stalked by the Shadow-thing and defenseless now, he has a desperate inspiration. Rushing past the Shadow— whose stone-shattering blow nearly takes off his leg— Conan leaps headlong to grasp the loosened tapestry. It tears free in a long tattered fragment. Other fragments shudder as if in a breeze.

ANGLE - CHAMBER

As the Shadow-thing rears back for another blow, Conan seems to court death. Somersaulting past the Shadow's swordblow, he arrives near the burning ember. He hurls the tapestry onto it, again rolls out of the way of the descending blade. The Shadow stalks after him—

ANGLE - CONAN

—and Conan is cornered, down on one knee. He grabs the broken knob from the floor by his feet, holding it ready to throw. The

Shadow-thing looms above him, sword raised.

ANGLE - EMBER & TAPESTRY

FLAMES LEAP UP; the tapestry burns with a sudden, dazzling flame, filling the chamber with a far greater light than that from the scattered ember-pieces.

ANGLE - SHADOW

seems to waver, even shrink, in the brightening glow. It still aims a blow, but the stroke is shortened. Conan evades the blow— only because it IS shortened. He tucks the broken knob into his belt unthinkingly, and grins—

ANGLE - CONAN

—leaps, grabs the full length of the loose tapestry still on the wall. It tears in his hands almost like parchment. Yet it holds firm enough for him to toss an end into the flames and dodge away.

ANGLE - BURNING TAPESTRY

FLAMES shoot up, higher, brighter, ROARING atop the stone floor—

ANGLE - SHADOW

wavers, shrinks, like a refracting mirror image in black. It makes a last move toward Conan, and even as it does, it fades— and is gone.

ANGLE - CONAN

crouches where he fell, gasping for breath, as the last of the dim shadows fade in the new light. His breath catches as he sees, above him—

CONAN'S POV - BAS-RELIEF WALL

—on a point high up on the carved wall, where the fallen tapestry hung. There is a MISSING STONE, which evidently fell and shattered to tiny fragments centuries ago. The hole left by the stone is just large enough for him to fit into.

ANGLE - CONAN

Quickly he spreads burning pieces of the tapestry around, so that, for the moment, all parts of the chamber are equally bright, leaving no place for sinister shadows to form. Then, finding footholds and handholds where no other man would, he scales the bas-relief wall. His foot even rests for a moment upon the head of the horned demon there, though he pays it no mind.

INT. CRYPT INNER CHAMBER - DOMED CEILING

Conan reaches the hole, looks back downward in the firelight.

CONAN'S POV - THE FLOOR

Tapestry still burns all around, but in one corner the fire smolders low. CAMERA PANS the chamber—

CONAN'S POV - CLOSE - A CORNER

—slightly and dimly shadowed: the SHADOW-THING begins slowly to form again, "eyes" gleaming like coals.

ANGLE - CONAN

fearful of the supernatural, scrambling to fit his huge frame into the black hole. A tight squeeze into darkness, and no guarantee of getting out the other end— but he makes it.

INT. HOLE

Conan crawls upward at an angle, hardly able to move. Stones press down upon him, no light shows at the end of this tunnel.

ANGLE - CONAN

halted by a solid flagstone before him. Beyond, perhaps, is either freedom, or death. He braces himself, pushes with all his might. GROANS of pain escape his lips, as muscles cord and ripple. Again and again he tries— to no apparent effect. He puts his all into one last, desperate effort—

CONAN'S POV - THE FLAGSTONE

And, as he expends the last of his energy, a SLIVER OF LIGHT shows through a widening crack between flagstone and tunnel wall. Daylight!

ANGLE - CONAN

pushes again, drawing on reserves of strength even he didn't know he had. With a GRATING sound of stone on stone, the stone moves— more easily now—

CONAN'S POV - THE FLAGSTONE

—to abruptly TOPPLE from its place, letting the blessed daylight pour in.

ANGLE - CONAN

Chest heaving, he hauls himself up and out—

EXT. CRYPT ROOF - DAY

—onto the domed roof. Lies there panting a moment, half in, half out of the hole made by the fallen flagstone.

ANGLE - CONAN

looks up at a SOUND of scuffling:

CONAN'S POV - ROOF EDGE

Crouched near the edge, a small human FIGURE draws back a hand, holding a knife—about to throw the blade at a target below OS. The figure is unaware of Conan's presence.

CLOSE - FIGURE'S WRIST

holding the knife, about to throw—suddenly, Conan's hand clamps down on the wrist, and Conan yanks back—

ANGLE - CONAN & YARA

—to find that he has grabbed the boy YARA. For the second time on this journey he twists the youth's wrist enough to make the boy drop his knife, which clatters to the ground below. Conan glances down to see what Yara was aiming at:

CONAN'S POV - ATALI & STRABO

Below, at the edge of the Crypt clearing, the Eunuch has Atali by the arm and is leading her north into the trees.

ANGLE - CONAN

holds the struggling Yara in an iron grip.

CONAN

Don't you ever give up?

YARA

You killed my father!

CONAN

I keep trying to tell
you—

Yara kicks him, and, off-balance, Conan tumbles backwards off the Crypt roof, carrying the boy with him.

EXT. CRYPT - DAY

They crash into the ground, and slide tumbling head over heels down the Crypt slope, finally landing in a breathless tangle at the base of the mound.

ANGLE - CONAN

Grunting, he heaves around as Yara tries to scramble away toward his knife, on the ground nearby. He grabs the boy's leg, gets another of Yara's feet planted firmly in his mouth, grabs again and this time gets the boy by the hair. A lot of effort for such a small reward. Not quite breathing hard, Conan gets up, holding the kicking, snarling Yara at arm's length.

ANGLE - CONAN & YARA

The sun is setting beyond the trees. Conan lets go of the boy, who turns on him like an angry wildcat. The Cimmerian pulls the broken knob from his belt, tosses it at Yara.

CONAN

Your work?

YARA

(defiantly)

Yes! I wish I'd trapped
you all in there!

He hurls the knob at Conan, who dodges, grabs him, and drags him around to the front of the Crypt-- all the time keeping an eye out for Kezanki.

EXT. CRYPT FRONT - SUNSET

He hauls Yara to the open pitfall, stares down into it. A large slab of bark half-covers the body of the dead savage, making a bridge across the spikes.

CONAN

Clever-- and strong. You
dragged that hunk of bark
all the way here, and the
Kezanki let you?

YARA

They are frightened
fools. Eons ago, the
Kezanki's ancestors
were set to guard this
crypt by my forefathers--
but now they have
forgotten all but a few
of the elder gods.

YARA (CONT'D)

(laughs)

When I yelled the Seven
Names, they fled into the
jungle like children.

CONAN

They won't be back for a
while?

YARA

(drawing himself
up proudly)

Not while Yara, son of
Yara, is here!

CONAN

Good.

He picks up the startled boy, and tears great strips off his shirt
as Yara writhes, kicking, cursing. He uses the strips to tie the
lad, hanging, to an outcropping on the crypt face. It's the stone
ear of a gargantuan carved demon.

CONAN

Then you'll have plenty
of time to work yourself
loose...

YARA

(shrieking)

I'll have your heart for
this! And when you're
dead, I'll use my
father's magic to conjure
you back to life— and
kill you again!

Conan starts down the hill, stops, and hesitates...

CONAN

You'll have your chance,
boy, if you want it...
but after I've dealt with
that pair.

He gestures in the direction taken by Strabo and Atali. Yara
follows Conan's gesture—and something changes in the youth's
attitude.

YARA

I thought you served the
Dreaming God.

CONAN

I'm a thief, boy... not a priest.

He strides away downhill, still eyeing the rain forest for signs of lurking Kezanki, as Yara cries out behind him.

YARA

Let me down... Damn you, thief... let me down!

The words fade as Conan reaches the trees and plunges into the forest, his knife out and ready, alert as a stalking panther.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST POOL - TWILIGHT

Atali lowers herself, trembling with the aftermath of violent emotion, to the leafy edge of a FOREST POOL. She stares at her reflection in the still water, her image framed by the high, dark trees around her, dim in the fading light.

ANGLE - STRABO

on guard, sword drawn, a few feet behind her, scanning the surrounding jungle for any sign of movement. Far off a bird cries; above, trees rustle in the evening wind. Everything is still, the air is pregnant.

CLOSE - ATALI'S REFLECTION

Her eyes are closed, as if she cannot face herself. Finally, shivering, she confronts her image. Her hand comes up over the water. Fingers open, and GLITTERING POWDER drifts down over the glassy surface.

THE POOL

shimmers and SOFTLY GLOWS, as Atali's reflection melts away. Replacing it is the fatherly face of Karanthes. His VOICE comes as if from far away.

KARANTHES

Blessings of Dagoth upon you, my daughter.

ANGLE - ATALI

answers distantly, mechanically.

ATALI
And upon you, Karanthes,
my father.

ANGLE - ATALI & POOL IMAGE

KARANTHES
The hour draws nigh; less
than five days remain.
(intently)
Do you have it?

From her tattered gown, she brings forth the black metal box with
the Ibis-lock, opens it, takes out the Horn. She sets the box
down on the ground.

ATALI
As you have commanded me,
father, it has been done.

Above, in the trees on Atali's side of the pool, leaves rustle,
wood creaks.

ANGLE - STRABO

looks up, listening. Hears nothing more.

KARANTHES (OS)
Bring it closer to the
pool, that I may see.

ANGLE - ATALI

obeying, she leans forward, over the pool, displaying the Horn.
Karanthes' image in the pool peers upward.

KARANTHES
The Horn...at last, after
all these many centuries...
(a beat)
And what of our friend,
the barbarian?

ATALI
(in monotone)
That, too, is as you
commanded, father.

KARANTHES
(sharply)
Atali...did he touch you?

ATALI
No.

KARANTHES
Then all is well.

ATALI
Yes, father. All is
well.

She slumps back, away from the pool, a cry torn from her heart.

ATALI
Why did he have to die?

Her cry echoes in the small clearing; birds rise screaming from across the pool, startled; there is a sudden RUSTLE above and behind her—she whirls about—

ANGLE - THE POOL CLEARING

—as Conan drops from a tree branch fifteen feet above, landing as lightly as a panther. Atali and Strabo gape—

CONAN
You should know by now...
Cimmerians die hard.

CLOSE - ATALI

relief and joy light her face.

ATALI
Conan!

CLOSE - STRABO

astonished. If he could talk, he'd be speechless.

CLOSE - KARANTHES' IMAGE

trying to see what's causing the commotion:

KARANTHES
What is it? Atali,
what's happening?

ANGLE - ATALI & POOL

More to herself than her father:

ATALI
(softly)
He's alive...

KARANTHES
Strabo, quickly—slay
him!

ATALI
(horrified)

No!

ANGLE - STRABO

grinning: he has a sword, and Conan but a knife. Swinging his blade in a great circle overhead, he lunges at the Cimmerian. Conan doesn't move till the last instant--then he steps INWARD, toward Strabo, and hits him a terrific blow to the belly. The sword flies from Strabo's hand.

ANGLE - ATALI

on her knees, beside the pool, delighted. Behind her, Karanthes' image scowls, begins to BRIGHTEN.

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

Conan slashes with his knife--but the Eunuch, recovering, catches Conan's wrist and twists downward, throwing the full weight of his body across the Cimmerian's arm. Despite himself, Conan grunts; the knife drops from nerveless fingers. Strabo is bent away from him, his back to Conan as he leverages the Cimmerian's arm, trying to snap it in two. Conan raises his fist and slams it down with sledgehammer force to Strabo's back. The Eunuch staggers away, breaking his grip.

CLOSE - ATALI

watching, concerned. CAMERA PANS DOWN from her face, past her hand holding the Horn, to the pool's edge. The WATER GLITTERS.

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

They crash together now like two bulls. Each takes a grip on the other's throat. Strabo's eyes burn with unholy glee. This, after all, is his forte. His arms lock. He bears down, and using all of his weight, he forces Conan back, back, back, until the Cimmerian slams up against a tree.

CLOSE - CONAN

making no attempt to push Strabo's hands away. The Eunuch's fingers dig deep into the flesh of Conan's throat. The skin purples. Conan, in turn, bears down.

CLOSE - STRABO

leers confidently, certain of triumph--

CLOSE - ATALI

watching, horrified.

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

Slowly...Conan straightens.

CLOSE - CONAN'S ARMS

Knots of muscle rise along his massive forearms, as if pushing strength into his hands--

CLOSE - STRABO

His leer slowly changes into a horrified grimace. His eyes glance downward. Conan's hands are closing like a vise. Blood drains from Strabo's face; his neck mottles. His mouth opens, exposing his maimed tongue, as he tries to draw a breath--and cannot.

CLOSE - CONAN

He starts to grin. Strabo's fingers loosen at his throat, scrabble frantically for purchase.

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

Inexorably, Conan forces Strabo down, iron fingers grinding deeper and deeper into yielding throat-muscles, crushing them in upon jugular and windpipe--

- CLOSE - STRABO

Nothing left in his face but unreasoning terror.

CLOSE - CONAN

grinning triumphantly now, as--

ANGLE - CONAN & STRABO

--with a savage WRENCE, Conan twists Strabo's head around until the ghastly face leers over one shoulder drunkenly, and the Eunuch's vertebrae SNAP like a rotted branch.--

Conan pushes the corpse aside like an empty sack, and turns toward Atali at the other end of the clearing.

ANGLE - ATALI & POOL

Relieved, she reaches out to him--

CLOSE - POOL

--as a HAND OF LIVING WATER jolts out of the pool, clamps about her wrist, and yanks her backward.

ANGLE - ATALI

screams as she's pulled into the GLITTERING WATER by the hand holding the Golden Horn.

ATALI
Conan! Help me!

Conan lunges across the clearing, grabs for her hand.

CLOSE - THEIR HANDS

barely touch, fingers brushing—and then she's pulled away, down under the pool's surface.

ANGLE - POOL'S EDGE

Conan gazes without understanding at the pool's churning surface.

CONAN'S POV - THE POOL

Atali is visible through the churning water, descending away at impossible speed, as if sucked into a whirlpool. Around her the swirling waters glitter and glow. She SCREAMS, her VOICE DISTORTED AND ECHOING.

ANGLE - CONAN

doesn't hesitate for an instant. Taking a running step, he dives into the pool, weaponless.

INT. THE POOL - CONAN

dives downward through a GLITTERING WHIRLPOOL OF LIGHT, which spins about him, flashing with bursts of color, sudden images, echoing with SCREAMS, ROARS, the SOUNDS OF COMBAT.

CONAN'S POV - ATALI

— — — — —
ahead and speeding away at fantastic speed, hair streaming about her as if in a hurricane wind. Her CRY ECHOES, DISTORTED:

ATALI
Co-nan—!

CLOSE - CONAN

redoubles his efforts, diving deeper. Winces as LIGHT FLASHES near his face, half-blinding him. MORE LIGHTS FLASH, of varying colors, and suddenly, he's surrounded by STREAKS OF SCARLET AND INDIGO, whipping past him, around him, around him—he loses himself, hands up to protect his eyes—

ANGLE - THE VISIONS

BLACK LIGHT lances past, curves about, returns like a thrusting sword. Conan, thrashing about, tries to dodge. The BLACK LIGHT hits him, and he is engulfed by DARKNESS.

CLOSE - CONAN

screaming in the utter blackness.

ANGLE - THE VISIONS

Abruptly, the darkness vanishes. Conan floats in the center of a STORM OF IMAGES, a hurricane of scenes which show, in random sequence:

THE PROLOGUE - darkness and light battling, taking shape as two demonic figures, one finally triumphant.

THE PRIESTS OF DAGOTE - swinging censers of incense, bowing in prayer, before a STONE WALL that contains something as yet unseen.

THE MOUNTAIN - looming over Shadizar, as STORM CLOUDS churn about it, and lightning scores its face, tearing slabs of stone free to avalanche downward upon the city.

SHADIZAR - its citizens in terrified flight as FIRES RAGE and the EARTH HEAVES, collapsing buildings, opening crevices in cobbled streets, flames from the earth-cracks leaping forth to swallow men and women whole.

THE SOOTESAYER - the old man from the early scenes in Shadizar, hand raised as he proclaims the final cataclysm, fires leaping up to swallow him whole.

ATALI'S BIRTHMARK - at first visible on her bare arm, as the CAMERA PANS OVER her naked body, then returns to the birthmark, which STIRS, COMING ALIVE, CHANGING SHAPE as it springs from her arm, wings unfolding.

DAGOTE - a terrible, featureless shape, -wings beating, -horned- skull twisting as the god roars into a sky filled with dancing flames.

THE HORN - gripped in Atali's hand, her face coming into focus behind it, entranced.

KARANTEES - laughing madly.

THE MOON - in eclipse.

THE LAND - splitting apart, foul steam erupting forth like pus, the land cracking, breaking, heaving apart as if SOMETHING HUGE beneath its surface were slowly pushing itself upward.

INTERCUT - CONAN

screaming as these visions assail him, until the last one fades into shadow, then BLACKNESS, again closing in on him, strangling him.

ANGLE - THE POOL

A DARK FIGURE swims toward Conan, hanging limp in the now-clear water. Bubbles drift lazily from his mouth; he's drowning, unconscious. The FIGURE draws near, takes a handful of Conan's hair, and tugs him upward toward the surface only a few feet above.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POOL CLEARING - CLOSE

on Conan, as he coughs up a lungful of water, chokes, turns over to find himself surrounded by the sharp points of half a dozen ASSEGAIS.

CONAN'S POV - IMBALAYO & BOMBAATA

show their teeth in a mirthless grin. Their spears press downward. With them are the rest of Zula's warriors, all also grinning. Bombaata, with a free hand, eats a stalk of sugar cane. The sap wets his lips.

ANGLE - CONAN

bracing himself as the spears press closer. Looking for a chance, ready to throw himself on death if need be.

ZULA (OS)

You've led us a fine
chase, thief.

Conan looks around. Zula stands by the pool edge, in a short tunic, dripping wet. She dries herself with a shirt, picks up her armor and dresses as she talks.

ZULA

And at the end, we almost
lost you.

(beat)

You won't escape me that
way, thief. I want you
to die...but in my time,
at my hand.

(draws her sword)

Now, I think.

Motioning the others back, she steps forward, sword ready to

thrust; Conan crouches, about to leap--

YARA (OS)

Stop!

Zula, startled, jerks her head up; Conan whirls in a crouch--

THEIR POV - YARA

parts foliage at the clearing's edge, steps through.

YARA

We need him.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Flames from the black warriors' campfire stir shadows amid the trees. Gomani and several other warriors stand watch over the camp, which is sheltered by two enormous fallen trees that cross at an angle.

Zula and Yara argue by the fire, as Bombaata, eating a piece of deer, sits guard over Conan. The other warriors crouch about, watching the Cimmerian warily. He, too, is eating--ravenously.

ZULA

This is madness. He slew
your father...

YARA

And for that he will
suffer when this work is
done.

Conan looks up at this, bemused. Zula flashes him a glance.

YARA (CONT'D)

But I am Yara now...
(at this, Zula bows
her head)
...and I say we need him.

ZULA

What can he do?

YARA

(eyeing Conan)

He's stronger than any
man I've ever seen... and
he's a thief. We need a
man like him if we're to
breach Karanthes' temple.

At this, Conan looks up intently, wolfishly.

ZULA
You are mad. Climb
Dagoth Peak... Enter that
demon-god's lair? Why?
Have you lost all reason?

YARA
(quietly)
Karanthes has the Horn.

Zula stiffens as if struck a physical blow. She turns, walks to the edge of the camp, staring up at the darkness. Yara approaches Conan, holding out the black Ibis "treasure" box.

YARA
Look, thief. See what
your greed has wrought.

CONAN
I see a box. An empty
box.

YARA
Look closer. The pattern
on the lid.

Conan turns the box in his hands.

CONAN'S POV - THE BOX

On the lid, the diamond-chips flicker, reflecting firelight.

ANGLE - CONAN

glances at Yara, who gestures upward. Conan's eyes follow the gesture.

CONAN'S POV - THE NIGHT SKY

The stars match the pattern on the treasure box lid. Three especially bright stars in a triangle.

ANGLE - CONAN

glances down at the lid again—

CONAN'S POV - THE BOX

The pattern is the same.

YARA (OS)

Once in a thousand years,
the stars match that
pattern...

ANGLE - CONAN & YARA

YARA (CONT'D)

...and when they do, then
can Dagoth be raised from
his sleep of eons.

(fiercely)

For more centuries than
man remembers, my family
guarded the Eye of Ibis,
and thus kept safe the
Horn from those who would
use it to wake The
Dreaming God.

(gestures at Zula)

Zula's people dedicate
their finest warriors to
our service, in our
allegiance, for this one
goal. To protect the
Horn.

CONAN

If it's so powerful, why
not destroy it?

ZULA

(angrily)

You might as easily pluck
the moon from the night.

YARA

The Horn cannot be
destroyed. A legion of
sorcerers died in the
trying, ages past.

(intensely)

No, thief. All we could
do was lock it away and
hide the key... until you
stole the key.

CONAN

The Eye...

ZULA

(raging)

Why? Why did you help
them?

CONAN
(shrugs)
I wanted the treasure.

YARA
I saw, thief. I came too late to act, but I saw what happened at the pool. You have given them what they require to wake their dreaming god. A god of pain and hate whose reign will mark the end of man on earth.
(despairing)
Do you see now what you have done, thief?

CONAN
My name is Conan. If we're to ride together, you'd better learn to use it.

He tosses the box into the stunned youth's hands, and returns to his food, staring moodily into the flames.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAGOTE PEAK - STORM - DAY

At the very top of the highest peak, carved into the face of the rock, is the TEMPLE OF DAGOTE, seen at the beginning of the film. Torches burn in slitted windows. FIGURES move across flying buttress-like stone bridges, from one part of the temple to another. At the highest point of the structure, jutting slightly away from the rock face, is a concave altar-platform about thirty yards wide and twenty feet deep. WHITE-ROBED PRIESTS gather here, busy with arcane preparations.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - DAY

As LIGHTNING scores through the bleak clouds so near above, PRIESTS light braziers about the platform, as ACOLYTES swing censers and an ancient priest, MORIA, reads from a mouldering book of scripture bound in iron: the BOOK OF SKELOS. The surface of the platform is smooth black granite glittering with chips of quartz.

MORIA
Branna nek mornia, brea
kuh noh Dagoth seth...

A cold wind whips his wispy white hair about his craggy features.

MORIA (CONT'D)

Noh grakoria mul othas...

INT. TEMPLE CHAMBER - DAY

Karanthes enters through a high iron door. Behind him is glimpsed a massive ALBINO GUARD, in armor of white metal, scarlet eyes gleaming. Karanthes waves him back with a gesture, shuts the heavy door behind him, and looks at--

ANGLE - ATALI

who stands in the center of this sanctuary chamber, surrounded by smoking braziers sweet with scented incense. She is attended by DAGOTHIAN PRIESTESSES, carefully veiled in white, dressed much as she was at the film's beginning. Atali herself is swathed in silky white, from neck to toe. One PRIESTESS puts a purple leaf into Atali's mouth; she chews it mechanically, eyes staring and unfocused.

PRIESTESS

Lotus flower. It calms her.

Karanthes nods. He seems possessed by a great sadness.

KARANTHES

I did not want it to be this way. This is a time of joy. You were born to a sacred task...

(touches her birthmark)

I would never have sent you into the world of men, but it was ordained thus... and even we are but the tools of a greater destiny.

(to priestess)

Will she be able to complete her task?

PRIESTESS

The drug impairs her mind, not her body.

Karanthes sighs. Briefly—and not at all in a fatherly manner—he caresses Atali's cheek, then retreats across the smokey chamber. Atali stands absently chewing, eyes unfocused.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Wind swirling his robes, Karanthes joins Moria.

KARANTHES

(shouting over storm)

Sunset in one hour...
then we begin.

Both glance across the altar platform at the sheer rock of the mountain, rising up at one side--there, embedded in the stone, is a fantastic FOSSILIZED FIGURE, half again as tall as a man, vaguely man-shaped, yet with long arms ribbed with wing-struts like a pterodactyl's. The skull of this ancient creature is twisted about in half-profile; visible in the forehead is an open hole, like a third eye, yet much larger.

A flight of stone steps rises beside this fossil, cut from the rock, as ancient as the fossil itself. Lightning erupts OS, and in the sudden flicker of light, the fossil seems to move--but, for now, it is only an illusion...

EXT. THE ROAD OF KINGS - DAY

Storm clouds thunder on the horizon over Shadizar far to the west. Streaming away from the city, in a mob that extends miles in either direction, are the CITIZENS OF SHADIZAR, wailing, terrified, in fear of their souls--

ANGLE - CONAN, ZULA & YARA

with Zula's warriors, shoving through the throng on horseback, making little headway. Too many people, too much hysteria. It's as if they were fighting their way upstream in a river of frightened humanity.

CONAN

What are they fleeing?

YARA

Dagoth--

(pointing ahead)

The end of the world.

CONAN

How can you flee the end
of the world?

ZULA

(reining about)

You can't.

With a shout, she spurs her stallion off the Road, her warriors charging after her, Yara in their midst. Conan hangs back,

glancing at the faces in the throng--

CONAN'S POV - THE FACES

Marked by terror, despair: some are unknown, some are familiar, faces seen before. The young MOTHER and her infant, the child screaming as she stumbles, almost drops it, staggers on; the half-blind bookie, jabbering in terror as he shoves ahead, is shoved back by the Shemite pit-fighter; the street urchins, dancing along in their elders' path, unaware of the terror behind them; and the toothless old man, glimpsed once before he falls from view, trampled by the mob. A merchant in a two-wheeled coach drawn by a snorting, wild-eyed bay, driven by a skinny SERVANT who whips the bay mercilessly, trying to make it plunge through the mob. The MERCHANT, surrounded by his possessions--silks, jewels, pottery filled with herbs, golden statuettes--fights off a GANG of tattered thugs, shrieking for help.

ANGLE - CONAN

reins about to send his stallion leaping across those citizens between him and the edge of the road. He spurs his horse across the rugged country toward Zula and Yara, heading west toward the city...

EXT. DAGOTH PEAK - SUNSET

Far west, beneath the roiling clouds, the SUN SETS in a furnace glare, painting the mountainside BLOOD RED...

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - SUNSET

Facing west, the priests watch the last light fade, the altar around them bathed in a ruddy glow reminiscent of the prologue's opening scenes. Karanthes turns, looks up.

KARANTHES' POV - THE STORM

As if blown to fragments by a more powerful wind, the black clouds part, roll back, to reveal the purple sky of twilight. A few stars glimmer. A pale FULL MOON rises to the east. Unearthly QUIET replaces the storm's thunder, as the sky is swept clean.

EXT. DAGOTH PEAK - TWILIGHT

Clouds roll back and away around the peak, vanishing with magical suddenness.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - TWILIGHT

Karanthes turns to the waiting priests and acolytes, Moria

foremost among them, and nods. Beneath their feet, as they move to begin the ritual, the granite floor of the platform reveals its secret: the quartz chips are set in the pattern of the starfield above.

EXT. SHADIZAR GATE - TWILIGHT

A few DRUNKEN STRAGGLERS stagger through the city gate, drinking from gourds, laughing maniacally. Conan, Zula, and Yara ride through their midst without pause, followed by Zula's warriors, Imbalayo in the lead. ONE DRUNK angrily swings a stolen hammock at the passing blacks. Bombaata leans out of his saddle as he rides past to tear the hammock from the drunk's hand.

ANGLE - BOMBAATA

takes a bite from the hammock as Gomani, riding beside him, gives him a disbelieving stare.

BOMBAATA

Only a fool meets death
on an empty stomach.

He laughs, a mirthless bark, tossing the hammock aside as they ride through the gates. Ahead, FLAMES brighten the night.

EXT. SHADIZAR MARKET STREET - TWILIGHT

Conan and Zula, riding together, staring about at the chaos and madness with shared distaste. Zula draws up, looks down at the bodies of two BLACK WARRIORS like those seen patrolling Shadizar in the early scenes. Their armor is the same as Zula's. Both have been speared in the back.

ZULA

They were our eyes and
ears in Shadizar.

ANGLE - YARA

wide-eyed, shaken, as a WOMAN SRIEKS in mortal agony OS.

MONTAGE - THE STREETS

A GUARDSMAN stumbles from a private house, arms filled with jewelry; he kicks a fellow GUARDSMAN who runs up to take his share.

TWO WOMEN kiss and embrace on a balcony, then one rips a clawed hand into the other's eyes, blinding her as FLAMES SHOOT UP around them.

DEAD BODIES sprawl, trampled or slain by sword and flame, as small

CHILDREN in rags pick through their clothes for valuables, looking up at the passing riders to hiss like cats protecting a kill.

A DOG gnaws at a dead man's leg.

A BUILDING shudders and collapses in a roar of sparks and flame.

FIGURES dart in and out of shadowed alleys and doorways, furtive, terrified; men or women? Impossible to tell.

THE SOOTESAYER lies staring amid charred ruins, his untouched face a grimace of horror, the rest of him blackened by fire to an unrecognizable, insect-like shell.

ANGLE - CONAN

spurs ahead, down a street aflame on either side, Zula, Yara, and the warriors following at a gallop behind.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - NIGHT

Above, stars burn bright. Moria goes to his knees, the BOOK OF SKELOS open on the ground before him, as FLAMES SHOOT UP from the braziers to either side.

MORIA

Dagoth nuh makora,
omnitha oritha nek
rekulus...

Acolytes come into view up a flight of steps from below, bearing METAL BOWLS carved with demon-shapes and runic symbols. Each bowl contains an ASPIRATOR, a device similiar to that used to dispense holy water at a more orthodox religious ceremony. Liquid sloshes in the bowls.

Karanthes and six other priests stand waiting for the acolytes at the rock face. Each priest lifts a dripping aspirator from a bowl. As one, they turn and shake the aspirators at the FOSSIL, sprinkling it with blackish liquid--

CLOSE - THE FOSSIL

--and as the liquid hits the fossil and runs down the stone, it becomes obvious what it is: blood.

ANGLE - THE PRIESTS

Some of the blood sprinkles their robes, scarlet on white, but the priests ignore it. Karanthes raises his voice in a chant.

KARANTHES

Nomat ka muh thalla,
Nomat ka muh thalla...

EXT. THE MOON

Rising full and ashen in a sky bright with stars.

EXT. THE MOON

seen from another, lower angle.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE - NIGHT

Conan, dismounting, is looking up at the moon, then shifts his gaze to the mountain rising above him. The city runs right up to the base of the mountain, like Pompei on the slopes of Vesuvius; buildings become fewer, the streets dead end into a stone path that cuts up the side of the cliff, turning back on itself several times as it progresses up toward the temple. The mountain thrusts a thousand feet into the starry sky, lights visible above at the temple.

ANGLE - THE GROUP

all dismounting, drawing weapons, assegais, swords. Conan starts toward the path up the mountain. Zula puts a hand out; she's going to go first. Then Yara darts ahead of them both. Conan shrugs, wryly amused. Zula glares at him, strides up the hill after her master. Conan comes after, leading the warriors, Imbralyo a step behind him.

EXT. THE MOUNTAIN PATH - NIGHT

Several hundred feet above Shadizar, which burns brightly below like a huge bonfire. Conan, Yara, Zula and the warriors make their way up a narrowing path. Yara looks up at the moon OS.

YARA'S POV - THE MOON

going into eclipse: a shallow arc cuts into one side of the lunar disk.

YARA (OS)

It's starting...

(to others)

When the shadows fully
hide the moon... a window
will open on hell.
Dagoth will be raised,
and if he is not
destroyed in those
moments before the moon
returns...

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - NIGHT

Karanthes prays silently, hands crossed on breast, on the platform edge. A DOZEN ALBINO GUARDS have joined the priests on the platform behind Karanthes. Beyond him the eclipsing moon is bright in the black sky. His prayers finished, Karanthes looks about. Atali ascends into view on the stairs leading from below, wrapped in her silky white robe. Dreaming. Two priestesses guide her gently.

EXT. LABYRINTH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rounding a corner, they find themselves before a TUNNEL leading into the cliff-face. Carved shapes surround the tunnel mouth, like souls in agony. Beyond, utter blackness. A TORCH burns in a niche beside the entrance. The path ends here. Conan glances up and backwards.

Three hundred feet overhead and slightly behind them slightly. No surface path joins their path to the temple. The tunnel, it would appear, is the only way up. In the sheer rock face above them, here and there, cave mouths open to blackness.

Conan gestures at the tunnel.

CONAN

In there?

YARA

(nodding, steeling
himself)

The Labyrinth. I must
lead.

ZULA

(to Conan)

It's what he has been
trained for since birth.

Yara approaches the tunnel mouth, removes the torch from its niche and holds it before him. Stepping carefully, as if entering a spider's nest, he enters the tunnel. Conan, Zula and Imbalayo follow, Bombaata and the rest behind.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - NIGHT

Above, the moon is one-quarter eclipsed. Like a father giving away the bride, Karanthes walks Atali to the stone steps beside the fossil. Moria stands waiting at the bottom of the steps. An acolyte presents the old priest with a black velvet pillow. On the pillow is the Golden Horn.

As Karanthes and Atali pause, Moria turns to the fossil, raising

the pillow as if in offering as he chants.

MORIA
Nuh omnitha tak ilo.

KARANTHES
Nuh omnitha tak ilo.

Moria moves about, offering the Horn to Atali. Karanthes takes her hand, closes her fingers about the Horn. Something stirs in her face. Fear? It fades as soon as it appears. In a trance, she presses the Horn to her bosom. Karanthes guides her to the steps...

INT. LABYRINTH - NIGHT

Torchlight sends shadows leaping on the low ceiling. Conan gives his own shadow a suspicious glance and a wide berth, staying away from the walls. Though wide enough for several to walk abreast, the tunnel is bizzare--cylindrical; there is no flat floor. Walking is difficult, as the tunnel is constantly turning, twisting back on itself, always rising. Sounds ricochet from all sides, making conversation impossible.

Yara is sweating, both from the torch's heat and his own tension. is a "life-size" version of the model labyrinth seen in his father's study. Yara halts, staring ahead OS. Conan comes up beside him.

WIDER ANGLE - OPEN PIT

The bottom half of the cylindrical tunnel drops away into pitch darkness ahead of them for a distance of twenty feet. Too far to jump across, the pit blocks the tunnel completely.

ANGLE - CONAN & YARA

Conan starts as Yara takes a deep breath and steps out into space.

WIDER ANGLE - OPEN PIT

But to the Cimmerian's surprise, Yara does not fall. As if walking on air, he crosses the pit and looks back from the far side.

YARA
(echoing)
Illusion.

Conan is uncertain, but--in three bounds across nothingness, he joins Yara. Looks back and grins like a boy when he sees Zula and her warriors hesitating. Noticing this, annoyed, Zula strides unburiedly across empty space. Imbalayo and the others follow. Bombaata balks, then hurries after in his turn.

EXT. THE MOON

Three-quarters gone.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

In measured steps, Karanthes guides Atali up the stone steps. Behind them, acolytes sprinkle blood onto the braziers. Black smoke pours skyward. Atali hesitates. Karanthes, stiffening, guides her onto the stairs. She looks up.

INT. LABYRINTH - THE GROUP

passing a pair of tunnels that cross their tunnel at a perpendicular angle. Two of the black warriors glance down the tunnel on their right, and freeze in surprise.

WARRIORS' POV - THE TUNNEL

Rushing toward them down this left tunnel is a FANTASTIC CREATURE, all teeth and claws and impossibly huge, ROARING.

ANGLE - THE TWO WARRIORS

instantly hurl their weapons—a sharpened club and a machete-like sword, at the attacking creature down the left tunnel... and from the right tunnel, directly behind them, fly those SAME WEAPONS a heartbeat after, striking their owners from behind.

ANGLE - CONAN & ZULA

hearing the double impact to the rear, they look back to see—the two warriors sprawled in death, one's skull smashed by his own club, the other's machete embedded in his own back. Imbalayo crouches over the dead warriors. The other blacks on guard, watchful, bewildered.

Conan and Zula warily approach the two perpendicular tunnels, glance down the one to the left—empty—and then, look down the one to the right—empty. No creature. Nothing.

CONAN

(to Yara)

How much more of this
madness?

YARA

We're past the worst. I
think.

CONAN

You think?

YARA
I never finished my
studies with the
Labyrinth, thief...
thanks to you.

Conan scowls as they move on.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS - NIGHT

Only a sliver of moon remains as Karanthes guides Atali up the steps. She hesitates. He urges her forward gently with hands on her shoulders. They are now nearly to the top of the steps, beneath the grim figure of the Dreaming God.

INT. LABYRINTH

Led by Conan, Zula and Yara, the warriors warily traverse the cylindrical corridor, alert for any attack.

ANGLE - BOMBAATA

near the rear, notices a crevice to one side. He slips cautiously into it, drawn by a GLIMMER in the dim light ahead.

BOMBAATA'S POV - A MIRROR

of his own height, at an oblique angle, inset in the stone of the crevice. His REFLECTION appears, dimly at first, then becoming clearer: jolly, stout Bombaata. He smiles at himself—then in a matter of seconds, the FLESH on his reflection SHRIVELS, FLAKES OFF in blackened chunks, revealing the WHITENED SKELETON beneath, still wearing Bombaata's armor, raising a skeletal arm as Bombaata raises his own arm, shrieking—

ANGLE - BOMBAATA

unchanged, though his mirror-image now COLLAPSES in dust. Shrieking, he staggers back from the mirror, down another angle of the crevice—

EXT. STONE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Bombaata staggers backward, out of the crevice, onto a natural STONE BRIDGE between two caves on the cliff face. Wind tears at him. Bombaata pauses, bewildered. He looks back, toward the crevice opening— then down at his feet.

BOMBAATA'S POV - STONE BRIDGE

One moment he is standing on the bridge. The next, it FADES into nothingness. Far below are the spires of Shadizar, dark in the

shadow of the eclipse.

ANGLE - BOMBAATA

screaming as he falls to his doom...

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Bombaata's dying SCREAM OS echoes distantly, rousing Atali from her stupor. Again, Karanthes put his hands to her shoulders, holding her with his piercing eyes.

KARANTHES

For this moment, I tore
you from your mother's
belly. For this moment,
I raised you and kept you
pure. You shall not
betray me. Do as I will.

She sways, eyes closing for an instant.

KARANTHES

(fiercely)

As I will.

Her eyes open and slowly focus on--

ATALI'S POV - THE FOSSIL SKULL

leering, monstrous, jaws agape as if in a silent scream.

INT. LABYRINTH - YARA

He comes to a "Y" where the tunnel branches in two equally safe-appearing directions. This resembles the model as it was seen in the lake temple earlier in the film. Yara hesitates, then chooses the left tunnel. Zula follows, Conan hanging back briefly.

Conan peers down the right channel: curious, he probes at the opening with his sword--and FLAMES curl from all sides, ready to incinerate any who enter. Conan yanks back his sword. The tip of it glows red-hot.

CONAN

Crom!

His voice ECHOES, "Crom" repeated over and over almost mockingly. Conan glares about him, moves on.

Only a handful of warriors are left. Yara leads them to a part of the cylindrical tunnel that widens into a fairly large chamber,

with THREE OPENINGS ahead of them, out of the chamber. The openings are set one atop the other, each dark and sinister. A duplicate of the trap which "killed" his projected IMAGE in the labyrinth model. Conan and the others look at Yara for guidance.

CONAN

Well, little wizard?

YARA

This is the test I
failed. I took the
lowest opening...

They clamber up rough, stone-carved steps to the two upper openings. Conan and Zula glance at each other, each prepared to risk his life first.

CONAN

I owe the boy.

Yara reacts to this, casts a reappraising glance at the Cimmerian. Seems to see Conan for the first time. Conan turns to him.

CONAN (CONT'D)

Now we'll find out whose
gods are awake tonight...
and whose are sleeping.

He starts forward, but Imbalayo darts ahead, assegai in hand.

IMBALAYO

(to Yara)

My father served your
father, and his before
him. It is my right.

Yara nods reluctantly. With a grin for Conan, Imbalayo enters the highest opening, crouching.

INT. HIGHEST TUNNEL - NIGHT

Imbalayo moves ahead, silently as a stalking leopard. Eyes scan the darkness. A step, another--and JAGGED SERRATED STEEL CLAWS spring out like a trap from the surrounding walls. He shrieks as they cut him in two.

INT. LABYRINTH

Conan and others react, horrified, enraged. Yara winces, but does not look away. Then, with Conan and Zula in the lead, the small group slips into the middle opening, warily.

INT. MIDDLE TUNNEL - NIGHT

Narrow, claustrophobic, barely tall enough to stand erect in. They cast suspicious glances about them as they proceed. Ahead a LIGHT GLOWS. Conan pads toward it cautiously.

INT. PREPARATION CHAMBER - NIGHT

Conan emerges, blinking, into the flickering torchlight of a shadowy, circular stone chamber. Yara and Zula close behind; others follow. Conan strains his eyes to see through the gloom.

CLOSE - CONAN'S FEET

He crouches to investigate a shallow ditch cut in the stone floor at his feet. He dips his fingertips into the dark liquid flowing through the ditch. His fingers come up red with blood. He turns his grim dark eyes toward the center of the chamber.

CONAN'S POV - THE BODIES

Stacked high, a pyramid of death and gruesome sacrifice, are hundreds of human corpses. Dimly seen in the flickering torchlight. Around the circular platform which holds the piled bodies is a moat of blood. Blood drains from this moat into several ditches.

ANGLE - CONAN

CONAN

Holy rites for the
dead... respectful
burial. So this is what
the priests of Dagoth do
with all the bodies they
disposed of.

YARA

For a thousand thousand
years.

They cross the chamber to a doorway on the opposite side. Halfway across, Conan again glances involuntarily at the corpses--and stops.

CONAN'S POV - SUBOTAI

The little thief's body lies among the others. And beneath Subotai... is the staring dead face of Magistrate Luda.

ANGLE - CONAN

wryly, wolfishly grinning in spite of himself.

CONAN

Well, Subotai, at least
you got the higher place
in hell.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Fully eclipsed now, the moon is like a black hole in the sky. Beneath the grotesque, blood-spattered fossil skull, Karanthes lowers his gaze from the moon to his entranced daughter. Putting his hands to Atali's shoulders, he loosens the straps which hold her gown. It falls about her feet. She stands nude in the dying moonlight, the Horn pressed to her bosom.

CLOSE - ATALI'S BIRTHMARK

It seems almost alive in the torchlight.

ANGLE - KARANTHES

Hands out before him, Karanthes begins his invocation.

KARANTHES

For untold eons, O
Dagoth, have we fed the
River of Blood, which
flows within this very
peak. It has nourished
thee in thy sleep, it has
sustained thee in thy
dreams.

ANGLE - PRIESTS & ACOLYTES

faces upturned, eager.

CLOSE - KARANTHES

KARANTHES (CONT'D) --

(voice rising)

Now, as decreed in the
Book of Skelos, the
daughter of thy high
priest at last stands
naked before thee... to
restore unto its rightful
place that which, in ages
past, was ripped untimely
from thy brow...

KARANTHES (CONT'D)

(in crescendo)

...the Golden Horn.

Atali, though entranced, seems almost to be resisting as she slowly raises the Horn toward the gaping hole in the mammoth skull, just within her reach. Suddenly--

YARA (OS)

(shouting)

No!

Karanthes whirls as Atali hesitates, the Horn poised near the skull. Karanthes glares--

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - NIGHT

Conan, Zula, and the four remaining black warriors crouch defiantly around the stairs which lead from the Temple below. Yara stands in front of them, one arm up and outstretched, imperiously, all traces of childhood gone. Facing them, turning in astonishment, are the priests and acolytes of Dagoth. Beyond them, at the platform's edge, are a dozen ALBINO GUARDS.

YARA

Hear me, Karanthes,
priest of Dagoth-- You
must not unleash this
horror upon the world. I
forbid it.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

KARANTHES

You forbid? You come too
late, with far too few,
boy, to give me orders.
(to priests)
Slay them!

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Rushing past the priests and acolytes, the ALBINO GUARDS charge with gleaming swords upraised. Conan and Zula leap in front of Yara, who stands unflinching. They and the four remaining warriors meet the attack, but are sorely outnumbered. One black falls in the first moment of the assault, felled by twin swords.

ANGLE - CONAN

all but severs the head of a charging albino.

ANGLE - ZULA

checks the downward arc of an albino's sword with her assegai, kicks the howling man and spears him when he drops. Grabbing his sword, she meets her next attacker with a weapon in each hand.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Karanthes watches anxiously, angrily, beside the entranced Atali. He turns his gaze skyward...the moon is still eclipsed. He raises his hands again to the starry heavens.

KARANTHES

Branna nek mornia, brea
kuh nob Dagoth seth...

ANGLE - PRIESTS & ACOLYTES

PRIESTS (ALL)

Noh grekoria mul othas,
nekto kuh kormak...

ANGLE - KARANTHES & ATALI

Without looking at her, whispers urgently:

KARANTHES

Now, my child... now.
(back to invocation)
Dagozai nzinga zoth,
shevatas mekri zal...
Dagoth.

Atali slowly raises the Golden Horn toward the gaping skull.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Seeing this, Yara draws his knife, presses it to his lips, and hurls it--

ANGLE - KNIFE

cutting through the air above the fighting albinos, the knife makes a ninety-degree turn--and flies toward Karanthes and Atali on the steps.

ANGLE - CONAN

glancing up as he dodges a swordblow, sees this.

CONAN

Yara, not the girl--!

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Karanthes, alerted by Conan's cry, looks left and gestures with a flick of his hand. The KNIFE seems to hit an invisible wall, drops with a clatter to the stone.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Conan meets the boy's sharp glance with his own. He has his own motives. A swinging axe cuts through the air, almost decapitates him. He drops back a step, parries, runs his opponent through. Zula, fighting beside him, grins with pantherlike admiration.

ZULA

You'll be a hard one to
kill, Cimmerian, when
this night is done.

The priests intone, all eyes upon the skull and the Horn.

PRIESTS

Irakzai jaga pteor...
Keluka thothon... Dagoth.

The name "Dagoth" echoes over all other sounds, of battle and wind.

PRIESTS

Dagoth...

ANGLE - ALBINO

as he pulls his steaming sword from a dead black warrior's flesh, GOMANI thrusts his assegai through the albino's armor. Locked in a deathgrip, the two warriors topple together off the platform.

ANGLE - PLATFORM EDGE

as Gomani and the albino fall toward the star-like lights of Shadizar a thousand feet below. They hit the cliff, bits of rock and dirt fly out after them, dwindle until they vanish in the distance.

ANGLE - CONAN & ZULA

back to back again, parrying, thrusting. Then their attackers close in, and Conan and Zula fight them off in a CLANGING of steel on steel, sinew against sinew. Conan looks up--

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS - CONAN'S POV

Atali lowers the Golden Horn from the high angle at which she holds it--

CLOSE - THE SKULL

--to fit the Horn flawlessly, perfectly, into the hole in the fossilized forehead.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Conan ducks under an albino, severing his axe-arm from his body, then breaks away from the battle to race across the platform past swaying priests. Zula and Yara react, astonished. Conan heads to the stairs.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Atali drops her hands limply to her sides, head bowed, not unlike a dangling puppet. Karanthes lifts his hands to the stone.

KARANTHES

Come, O Dagoth... Let the blinding light of judgment cast down the temples of Mitra, of Ibis, of Ishtar... and establish thy just rule over all the peoples of the earth.

ANGLE - CONAN

blocked by two albino guards at the base of the stairs. He cuts them down--looks up past Karanthes--

KARANTHES

O Dagoth... awake!

CLOSE - THE SKULL

A beat.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

In the same instant, all fighting stops--as if everyone were drawing a breath at once, all eyes turning to the stone face; even Zula, even Yara, and the priests--

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS - CONAN

runs up the steps, sword in hand, eyes blazing, the only moving figure in the scene--

CLOSE - THE SKULL

Softly, slowly, as if from a cosmos away, a slight RUMBLING SOUND begins. A few stone chips fall away from places where stone meets skull.

ANGLE - KARANTHES & ATALI

Karantes is transfixed, awed. Atali dazed. Conan takes the steps behind them two and three at a time. He reaches the platform behind Karantes, raises his sword in both hands to swing a deathblow--

--and like an erupting volcano, the stone around the fossil BLOWS AWAY, exploding outward with fantastic force, stone chips and shards flying.

ANGLE - CONAN

hit by the exploding fury, is blown backward off the stairs, dropping his sword, like a straw in a hurricane. He's blown past Karantes and Atali, to one side, struck by the wind but not by its full fury.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Wind and stone chips tear at the priests and acolytes, cutting them, not seriously--and they seem almost to exult in it. Conan is blown over their heads, hits the platform near the edge, rolls. Zula tries to reach him, but is blocked by the remaining albino guards.

ANGLE - PLATFORM EDGE

--and Conan goes over the edge, grabbing for purchase, anything; finding nothing.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

More stone flies away, not explosively now, revealing pterodactyl-like wings. One bony, taloned hand drops free, to hang limply, swaying slightly. The other wing-hand, too, is now out in the open. Karantes' eyes are ablaze with ecstasy; he cannot speak.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - NIGHT

Conan falls, arms flailing--

CLOSE - CONAN'S HAND

catches an outjutting, jagged rock by desperate chance.

ANGLE - CONAN

grimaces with pain as the impact nearly tears his arm from its socket. Can't get his other arm up.

CLOSE - CONAN'S HAND

bleeding, badly cut. His fingers slip, moment by moment.

LONG SHOT - CLIFF FACE - CONAN

dangles in agony, dozens of feet below the temple platform, a thousand feet above the burning lights of Shadizar.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Zula's assegai is knocked from her grasp by an albino, she's grappled by two more, and held, though struggling fiercely. Yara, unmoving but anxious, is held by acolytes. All gaze upward with varying emotions at the scene near the top of the altar stairs.

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Karanthes nears the huge fossilized skeleton, which shifts about like some bizarre giant reptile hatching from a stone egg. Karanthes is only a yard from the bony hands.

KARANTHES

(awed)

Dagoth... my lord.

CLOSE - THE SKELETAL HANDS

suddenly tear loose from the rock, reaching up to grasp Karanthes by the throat, his eyes going wide with shock—

ANGLE - KARANTHES

is lifted bodily in one effortless motion above the fossil skull—held there a shuddering instant—and then is IMPALED on the Horn. It tears into his abdomen just below the ribcage, rips through his diaphragm and out his back. Karanthes SHRIEKS—a long, echoing SCREAM OF PAIN AND TERROR.

QUICK CUTS - as SCREAM ECHOES:

PRIESTS, ACOLYTES, ALBINOES - speechless, horrified—

YARA - grim in the hands of his stunned captors—

ZULA - wide-eyed with fear and amazement—

ATALI - her senses returning, awakened by that scream--

CLOSE - KARANTHES

His shriek cut off now...he slumps, dead.

ANGLE - ATALI

shaking off the drug-induced lethargy, focusing with difficulty on:

ANGLE - FOSSIL SKELETON

with Karanthes' corpse impaled upon its Horn. Now, with horrifying speed, it is as if the priest's flesh is turned to liquid. It flows from all parts of his carcass onto the Horn, as if absorbed by some irresistible power, and spreads itself in new form over the skeleton of Dagoth. The result is a patchwork job, because the fossil is much larger than the priest; like flesh on a rotting corpse. In seconds, Karanthes' skeleton is stripped bare.

CLOSE - ATALI

screams, hands to face, but cannot turn aside.

ANGLE - DAGOTH

pulls Karanthes' dangling skeleton off his Horn and flings it contemptuously aside. The god's skull is now half-covered with glistening flesh. The beginnings of leathery skin also connect his bony wing-struts. The god pulls loose from the remains of his stone cocoon. A jagged FISSURE appears in the stone where he lay.

CLOSE - DAGOTH

Eyes gleam from the great sockets now, with evil blackness--alive, seeking.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - CLOSE - YARA

spellbound, hushed.

YARA
The Dreaming God...

EXT. ALTAR STAIRS

Before Dagoth, Atali swoons--but the god-demon's long, half-fleshy arm catches her before she can topple from the steps. Draping her over that arm, he tears free from the last bits of stone which hold him.

ANGLE - STONE FISSURE

The jagged crack splits wider, then wider again. Like a great dark lightning point, pointing downward at the altar platform--through Dagoth Peak--to Shadizar the Wicked--and at the world beyond.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Atali over one arm, Dagoth leaps with some effort down to the platform. One of his legs lands heavily on a priest, bearing him screaming to the ground. With his free claw, Dagoth scoops the fallen priest up and impales him, too, on the Horn.

ANGLE - PRIESTS, ACOLYTES, ALBINOS

watch with horror as OS the flesh is drained from this lesser priest onto the Dreaming God.

ANGLE - ZULA

sickened, struggling with her guards, who hold fast despite their horror.

ANGLE - DAGOTH

tosses aside the now-fleshless skeleton of the dead priest. His own form is more fully fleshed out. Acolytes and albinos scatter before him in new panic. He stalks toward MORIA, the elderly priest, trapped between him and the platform edge.

ANGLE - MORIA

goes to his knees. Can barely be heard above the horrified CRIES and general MELEE.

MORIA

Dagoth, O most wise and
mighty and merciful, who
hold the world in thy
taloned hand... who shall
come in judgment...

Dagoth cocks his head curiously, studying the praying priest. Then, with a sudden motion, grabs Moria up, lifts him squirming aloft, and impales him.

EXT. STONE FISSURE

broadening, cutting through the middle of the platform now, fissuring downward over the platform edge. Stone rumbles and cracks, throwing running priests to their knees.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

A shadow falls over the guards holding Yara. They bolt for the stairs leading down into the temple, following a general flight of acolytes and guards. Yara doesn't move, staring up OS at the source of the shadow.

YARA'S POV - DAGOTE

casting the shadow, approaching, Atali over one arm stirring in her swoon.

YARA

faces the god without fear. Around and behind him, panicking acolytes mill in confusion, terror.

Dagoth, recognizing instinctively his enemy across the ages. He raises his free hand, and his voice, skyward. Utters a loud, INEUMAN CRY that echoes—

EXT. STONE FISSURE

—as DAGOTE'S INEUMAN ROAR merges with the CRACKING of rock, as the fissure splits open the cliff face itself, exposing raw black rock. The very mountain seems to be tearing apart. Slabs of stone fall away from the mountain.

INT. THE TEMPLE - NIGHT

The temple itself shudders, great cracks ripping along the walls. Walls fall away, and from within the temple priests and acolytes spill out into the night, like ants shaken from a terrarium. Others cling desperately to stone pillars supporting roofs and floors. The pillars themselves start to crack and fall. Great chunks of rock and wall and ceiling crush fleeing Dagothians.

EXT. DAGOTE PEAK - NIGHT

The moon in eclipse above. The peak shudders, a huge shard of it—many thousands of tons—falls away and down the mountainside—

EXT. SEADIZAR - NIGHT

—to crash upon the city below. Buildings, animals, people are crushed by the huge shard, now shattered into a thousand pieces.

EXT. SHADIZAR STREETS - NIGHT

Like the vision~~s~~ in the pool: The earth heaves, buildings collapse. Crevices open in cobbled streets, flames leap from fissures even as men and women fall screaming into them...

EXT. THE ROAD BEYOND SHADIZAR - NIGHT

The very earth SPLITS APART under the refugees' feet. Steam erupts, blinding, scalding. Jagged boulders thrust up from beneath the ground like bayonets. People, carts, animals, are tossed about like so many toy soldiers by an angry child. Some refugees pray--some flee--some are dead or dying--

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Dagoth lowers his head, the CRACKING SOUND continuing even as his roar fades. He glares again at Yara. The youth stands ready to meet his doom, but will not flee from it. The god half-stalks, half-glides on batlike wings toward the young wizard.

ANGLE - ZULA

breaks free from her guards, who seem paralyzed with terror. Pulling a sword from one albino, she guts the other, cuts the first one down on the return stroke. Dropping the sword, she grabs up her assegai--and, with the battle cry of her ancient tribe echoing from her lips, she hurls herself into Dagoth's path. She knocks the boy aside, onto the edge of the widening fissure; he sprawls unconscious from the blow.

Armed only with the assegai, Zula stabs at Dagoth's leathery side. The point penetrates several inches, but the Dreaming God does not bleed. Angrily, he whirls, throwing Atali aside, and she thrusts at his extended hand. The spear goes through, is caught. Roaring in anger, he yanks it out and tosses it aside.

ANGLE - ATALI

stirring on the shifting stone platform, the ground beneath her rumbling with continued quaking.

ANGLE - ZULA

between Yara's unconscious form and the looming god, she grabs up a heavy shard of rock. Bracing herself on the heaving, quaking platform, she brings the rock smashing down against Dagoth's breast. He ignores it, catches her up and snaps her back across his chest as easily as a man might snap a withered branch.

EXT. PLATFORM EDGE - CLOSE

as two mighty hands grasp the edge from below, and a bronzed,

dark-maned form thrusts itself up powerfully onto the platform. It is CONAN—bleeding, bruised—but eyes alive with the fire of a barbarian's berserker rage.

CONAN'S POV - DAGOTH

stalks toward Yara. Atali lies in his path, stirring.

ANGLE - CONAN

starts a moment at the sight of this shambling horror. Then, almost by instinct, he grabs up a fallen sword and charges, yelling a CIMMERIAN WAR-CRY. He drives his sword deep, two-handed, into the god's side. Dagoth does not bleed, but screeches in surprise and pain. He turns and swats Conan backhanded, spinning him a score of yards across the platform, almost into a yawning fissure. But Conan is on his feet again in a moment, snarling, drawing his knife from his belt.

Dagoth pauses atop the shuddering platform. Looks skyward.

DAGOTH'S POV - THE MOON

Eclipsed. Yet, the first tiny sliver of light appears at the edge of the black moon.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Dagoth looks down, sees Atali, and picks her up. Awake now, she sees the monster above her and screams. Ignoring this, Dagoth crouches and springs into the air like a launching bat.

Conan takes a running leap after him, hurling himself into space—and catches Dagoth's leg. With his strength and his weight, Conan literally drags the god down. Dagoth lands with a massive crash amid the rubble of the shuddering mountaintop. More rock crashes from the peak around them.

INT. TEMPLE

Directly beneath the platform, the last vestiges of the temple collapse as ceilings and pillars all cave in with a THUNDEROUS ROAR following Dagoth's crash.

INT. BLOOD CHAMBER - NIGHT

Mountain and masonry crash in, too, upon the bodies of the men and women whose blood nourished the god in his dreaming sleep.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Dropping Atali, Dagoth whirls snarling upon Conan. But the

Cimmerian manages first to swing onto Dagoth's back. He wraps powerful legs around that massive torso. Rock crashes around them.

His face a mask of rage and desperation, arm locked around the god's neck, Conan drives his knife again and again into Dagoth's chest. But he can find no vital part—no blood. It's like stabbing wood.

Dagoth's claws rake the Cimmerian's legs and back, find purchase, and heave Conan to the ground. Before the Cimmerian can dodge, Dagoth has him locked in a deadly embrace, and lifts him up, to impale Conan on the Horn. Knife gone, Conan fights back—human sinew against demonic power. Slowly, inexorably, Conan is drawn closer and closer to the Horn.

CLOSE - DAGOTH'S EYES

blinking with ungodly bloodlust.

CLOSE - THE HORN

red with blood.

CLOSE - CONAN & DAGOTE

The Cimmerian is straining, desperate, as Dagoth, mouth agape, gives an almost reptilian hiss.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Yara, head swimming, raises his eyes. Above, the moon shows a definite sliver of light on one edge. Yara sees Conan, tries to speak... but he's too weak. He mouths the words, but no sound comes...

Atali, near him, glances from Yara to Conan, wide-eyed—

ATALI

— The Horn, Conan! Break
the Horn!

ANGLE - CONAN

hears the cry. Instantly ceases all struggling, to grasp the Horn with both hands. Dagoth's talons rake his back. The demon-god tries to crush him, break his spine, and Conan groans with pain—but does not relinquish his hold. He strains as he has never strained before. Every vein, every muscle seems near to bursting.

CLOSE - DAGOTE

SHRIEKS in pain and fear, and hurls himself—and Conan—up into

the sky, leathery wings beating.

EXT. THE SKY - NIGHT

Conan and Dagoth, each with a deathgrip on the other, writhe in mid-air some yards above the platform—a thousand feet over Shadizar. Below them, the mountain shudders, quakes. Behind them, a sliver of moonlight widens around the edge of the black lunar disk. A tableau out of Dante's Inferno, or some primal myth forgotten since the dawn of mind.

CLOSER - CONAN

is breathing hard, near to the end of his strength, as Dagoth slowly crushes him, claws digging into Conan's spine.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM

Yara and Atali, half mad with uncertainty—

EXT. THE SKY

It seems Dagoth has won. Gripping Conan, he draws him down toward the Horn—Conan still gripping it—

CLOSE - CONAN'S HANDS

as the flesh on his hands RIPPLES, as if tugged toward the Horn—

CLOSE - THE HORN

about to penetrate Conan's chest—it touches, SIZZLES—

CLOSE - CONAN

spurred to new desperation, fury, by pain—and ROARING—

CLOSE - CONAN'S HANDS

—he wrenches UPWARD, powerfully. Something CRUNCHES, RIPS. And in a spurt of BLACK ICHOR, Conan tears the Horn free at its base from Dagoth's skull.

CLOSE - DAGOTH

screams in real pain as ICHOR gouts over his eyes—

ANGLE - CONAN & DAGOTH

—the black ichor drenching the Cimmerian's chest and arms. Dagoth's wings flap like those of a mortally wounded bird. He spins about in the sky, blindly, still holding Conan, who grasps

the dripping Horn in one hand.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - CONAN

kicks free of the fluttering god, dropping a dozen feet to the altar platform. Atali rushes toward him. Yara doesn't move, eyes riveted on—

EXT. THE SKY - DAGOTE - LONG SHOT

spinning, wheeling, SCREAMING. The flesh pours from him now, black ichor hissing over bubbling skin. He's little more than a massive, ichor-coated skeleton now, not enough flesh on his wing struts to support him. With a final despairing cry he crashes into the mountainside. The quaking has ceased. At impact, the god becomes a broken puppet of shattered bones, and these tumble earthward.

TRAVELING SHOT - THE BONES

plunge, and as they plunge downward, turn to dust—

EXT. SHADIZAR - NIGHT

—and the dust, like black snow, sprinkles the heads of startled, awestruck ONLOOKERS huddling in doorways or clinging to pillars near the great crevices, amid the carnage and destruction.

EXT. ALTAR PLATFORM - NIGHT

All is clear under the stars. Conan staggers to his feet, helped by Atali, the Horn in one hand. Atali wears Zula's fallen cloak loosely about her shoulders. Yara too offers a hand; he and Conan lock eyes, then Conan takes the hand, and all rise to look skyward...

THEIR POV - THE MOON

the eclipse ending now, a quarter and more of the moon visible.

ANGLE - CONAN & ATALI

as she winces in sympathy, touching his wounds.

CONAN

(shrugs)

You can't expect to fight
the devil and come away
with a whole skin.

Atali buries her head in his arm. Next moment, as Conan opens his

fingers, the Horn turns to dust and blows away. Somewhat startled, Conan brushes his hand off against his thigh, repulsed. Then looks in surprise at Atali's forearm--

CONAN'S POV - ATALI'S ARM

--as the dragon-god birthmark fades from view.

ANGLE - CONAN

frowning, unsettled by this final brush with sorcery. He glances next at--ZULA, lying dead amid the debris. He is as wistful as a Cimmerian can ever be. Behind him, Yara steps back, reaches down, and comes up with his knife.

ANGLE - YARA

From this angle, the Cimmerian's back presents a tempting target. Yara hesitates for a moment... then his eyes sweep the carnage around him, and slowly he sheathes his blade.

ANGLE - CONAN

relaxes, just a bit.

CONAN'S POV - ZULA'S ARMOR

In the burnished plate of Zula's armor, Yara's reflection can be seen, sheathing his knife.

ANGLE - CONAN & ATALI

He turns, taking Atali's hand, and to her surprise, and Yara's, gives her hand to the young wizard. Conan grins when Atali looks at him questioningly.

CONAN

(to Yara)

Take care of her, lad.
You're both believers.
You belong together.

ATALI

(to Conan, sadly)

You never did get the
treasure you wanted, did
you?

CONAN

(enigmatic)

Not the one I truly
wanted.

He bends, lifts Zula, tenderly. There is a great sadness in his eyes for this fallen comrade. As he starts down the temple

stairs, behind him Yara retrieves the Amazon's assegai, Atali a piece of her fallen armor. They fall into step behind Conan, leaving behind the corpses and mad angles of the crevice-riven altar platform...

EXT. THE MOON

Fully visible, bright, in an unclouded sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MOON - NIGHT

The half-moon reveals it is a fortnight later. CAMERA PANS DOWN past the cracked and jagged remnant of DAGOTH PEAK. No longer is the peak's shape like that of a horn. CAMERA CONTINUES PAN to reveal...

EXT. SEADIZAR - NIGHT

Seen from above, as first seen in the beginning of the film. Shadizar is changed, yet still she lives, this city of thieves. Great gaps lace her city walls, only partly filled-in by makeshift mortar and stone, and more than one fine spire is broken off or proud dome collapsed, as if struck by the fist of an angry god.

Still, among the partly-fallen structures, some torches still burn— as many as before, really— and the SOUNDS of bawdy laughter, raucous music, and forced gaiety spill out once more from the half-crumbled buildings and darkened doorways.

And there, in the heart of The Maze, is the TAVERN where Conan fought more than one kind of battle, a place whose doorway emanates more than its share of SHOUTS AND MUSIC...

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Inside, things are not much different than they were before Armageddon. WENCHES flirt and duck burly arms (or don't) as they wend their trays through crowds of ZAMORIANS, Oriental KHITANS, black KUSHITES... every kind of thief and soldier and wanderer. All drinking and shouting and singing as if to blot out all memory of doomsday.

ANGLE - PIT

There, the huge SEEMITE who fought Conan is having no better luck with an even huger KHITAN, who must be the ancestor of all Sumo wrestlers. His groans are real. The motley crowd gathered around the pit lap it up, as the half-blind BOOKIE takes bets frantically.

ANGLE - BOOKIE

as he spots someone on the balcony above, OS. He beckons, tries to get the unseen one's attention. After a moment, he shrugs, gives it up and goes back to hustling bets.

ANGLE - BALCONY

CAMERA PANS UP to the second floor landing, where Conan the Cimmerian leans on a rail, gazing grimly down upon this madhouse. Near and behind him, WENCHES and MERCENARIES cavort, laughing and pointing as they lean out to watch the action in the pit below. Instinctively they give Conan a wide birth. One WENCH starts toward him—pauses, struck by Conan's posture, uneasily turns away. He is apart from this scene. In it, but not of it, as he once would have been.

CLOSE - CONAN

Looking down at the aftermath of Gotterdammerung... men and women who survived doomsday, only to swiftly revert to their empty, hedonistic existence. Perhaps he wonders if it was worth it.

TRAVELING SHOT - CONAN

turns and strides down the stairs, through the throng, which parts before him. Most pay him no mind; those who do keep out of his way. He is a lion among the jackals. He throws open the doorway which leads to--

EXT. SHADIZAR STREET - NIGHT

—the cobbled, muddy street outside. Music and roaring laughter and excited shouts are muted behind him as the door slams shut.

ANGLE - STALLION

A proud stallion is tethered to a nearby broken pillar. Several DRUNKEN SOLDIERS and their WENCHES reel past, off in a world of their own.

Without a backward glance, Conan mounts the stallion, reins about, and rides off...

EXT. SHADIZAR CITY GATES - NIGHT

as Conan bursts through at a full gallop, away down the road into dusky shadow, toward the wide world beyond Shadizar the Wicked.

FADE TO BLACK